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PLUTARCH

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The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

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To my wife, Pia.

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Notes on Contributors

Eran Almagor is a lecturer in the History Department at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. He was a research fellow at the Max Weber Kolleg, Erfurt (2011), the Simon Dubnow Institut, Leipzig (2009–2011), and a British Academy Visiting Fellow in Oxford (2009). His research interests cover Plutarch's *Lives* and writings, Greek Imperial authors, and the image of Persia in Greek texts of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. Among his forthcoming works is the co-edited volume *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* and the monograph *Plutarch and the Persica*.

Francesco Becchi is a Professor of Greek Language and Literature at Florence University, Italy. He studied ethical literature in its historical development from the Classical Age to the Imperial Age. His interests are in scientific texts of philosophy such as the *Meteorologica* of Aristotle, *Problemata* of Ps.-Aristotle, *De signis* and *De ventis*, attributed to Theophrastus, and Plutarch's zoopsychological writings. He is also interested in the fortune of Plutarch's *Moralia* through Latin translations in the age of humanism and the Renaissance and in later centuries through printed editions starting from Aldina. He has published several articles on these topics in international journals as well as critical editions, with introduction, translation, and commentary, of Plutarch's *De virtute morali* (1990) and *De fortuna* (2010).

Mark Beck is currently Associate Professor of Classics at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, United States. He has published several articles and chapters on Plutarch.

Jeffrey Beneker is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, United States. He has published *The Passionate Statesman: Eros and Politics in Plutarch's Lives* (2012), in addition to several articles on Plutarch and ancient biography.

Lukas de Blois is Professor of Ancient History at the Radboud University of Nijmegen, The Netherlands. He has published books and articles on the history of the Roman Empire

in the third century CE, the history of the Late Roman Republic, ancient historiography (Sallust, Tacitus, Cassius Dio), Plutarch's works, and Greek Sicily in the fourth century BCE. He has also published, with R.J. van der Spek, *Introduction to the Ancient World* (2nd ed., 2008). He is a member of the editorial board of the international network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, 200 B.C.–A.D. 476).

Mauro Bonazzi teaches History of Ancient Philosophy at the Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy. He has written on Plato, the history of Platonism in general, and on Plutarch in particular. His most recent books include *Academici e Platonici. Il dibattito sullo scetticismo di Platone* (2003), *Platone. Fedro* (2011), and (co-edited with Thomas Bénatouil) *Theoria, Praxis and the Contemplative Life after Plato and Aristotle* (2012).

Bernard Boulet is currently Professor of Philosophy at Université Laval, Quebec City, Canada, where he teaches in a Great Books program. Prior to this he taught for many years at Sainte-Foy College in Quebec City. He has published books on Plato, Descartes, and Machiavelli.

Ewen Bowie was Praelector in Classics at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, UK, from 1965 to 2007, and successively University Lecturer, Reader, and Professor of Classical Languages and Literature in the University of Oxford. He is now an Emeritus Fellow of Corpus Christi College. He has published articles on early Greek elegiac, iambic, and lyric poetry; on Aristophanes; on Hellenistic poetry; and on many aspects of Greek literature and culture from the first century BCE to the third century CE, including Plutarch and the Greek novels. He recently edited (jointly with Jaś Elsner) a collection of papers on Philostratus (2009) and (jointly with Lucia Athanassaki) a collection of papers entitled *Archaic and Classical Choral Song* (2011) and is currently completing a commentary on Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*.

Gordon Braden is Linden Kent Memorial Professor of English at the University of Virginia, United States. He is author of *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (1978), *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition* (1985), and *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (1999), co-author with William Kerrigan of *The Idea of the Renaissance* (1989), and co-editor with Robert Cummings and Stuart Gillespie of *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 2, 1550–1660 (2010).

Craig Cooper is Dean of Arts and Science at the University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. He has written and published on Athenian law, Greek rhetoric, Greek historiography, and Greek biography, including Plutarch.

John Dillon graduated in Literae Humaniores from Oxford in 1963, and gained a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley in 1969. He joined the faculty of the Department of Classics at Berkeley, where he remained until 1980, serving as Chairman of the Department from 1977 to 1980. He then returned to Ireland, to assume the Regius Professorship of Greek at Trinity College Dublin, where he remained until his retirement in 2006. He is the author or editor of over thirty books in the area of Greek philosophy, in particular the history of the Platonic tradition, including *The Middle Platonists* (2nd ed., 1996),

Alcinous: The Handbook of Platonism (trans., with commentary, 1993), *Iamblichus: De Anima* (ed. with John Finamore, with introduction, translation, and commentary, 2002), *The Heirs of Plato: A Study of the Old Academy, 347–274B.C.* (2003), and three collections of essays, *The Golden Chain: Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (1991), *The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Christianity* (1997), and *The Platonic Heritage* (2012).

Timothy E. Duff is Professor of Greek at the University of Reading, UK. He is author of *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (1999) as well as numerous papers on Plutarch. He is editor and co-translator (with Ian Scott-Kilvert) of *Plutarch: The Age of Alexander* (2012).

Françoise Frazier is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the Université de Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, France. She wrote her dissertation on the presentation of historical material in the *Parallel Lives*, has edited Plutarch's *Moralia*, and has published numerous articles. She is the representative of the French section of the IPS (International Plutarch Society) and book review editor of the journal *Ploutarchos*.

Joseph Geiger is Shalom Horowitz Professor of Classics Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He has published extensively on ancient biography, Cornelius Nepos, and Plutarch, including his monograph *Cornelius Nepos and Ancient Political Biography* (1985) and, most recently, a chapter on autobiographical literature during the Augustan Age in G. Marasco (ed.), *Political Autobiographies and Memoirs in Antiquity* (2011).

Aristoula Georgiadou is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Patras, Greece. She is the author of *Plutarch's Pelopidas: A Historical and Philological Commentary* (1997) and co-author of *Plutarco. Pelopida e Marcello* (1998) and *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel "True Histories": Interpretation and Commentary* (1998). Current projects include a commentary on Plutarch's *Amatorius*.

Olivier Guerrier is Professor of French Literature of the Renaissance at the Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail, France. He is an honorary member of the French Institut Universitaire and president of the Société Internationale des Amis de Montaigne. He specializes in Montaigne, in the relationship between literature and other branches of knowledge, in the Renaissance and questions related to fiction in that period. His numerous publications include "*Quand les poètes feignent*": "*fantasie*" et fiction dans les *Essais de Montaigne* (2002), *Moralia et Œuvres morales à la Renaissance: Actes du colloque international de Toulouse (mai 2005)* (2008), and *Plutarque de l'Âge classique au XIXe siècle – Présences, interférences et dynamique* (2012).

Rainer Hirsch-Luipold is Professor for New Testament Studies at Bern University, Switzerland, and head of the German section of the International Plutarch Society. He has worked and published on religious philosophy and philosophical religion in the Early Empire and especially on Plutarch's religious philosophy as well as on philosophical and religious use of imagery.

Eleni Kechagia-Ovseiko studied Classics and Ancient Philosophy at the Universities of Thessaloniki, Greece (BA and Masters), and Oxford, UK (DPhil). From 2006 to 2009 she was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in Classics at Oxford (Keble College). She has written articles on Plutarch, Epicureanism, and ancient biography, and has been teaching Classics and Ancient Philosophy for Oxford colleges. Her monograph, *Plutarch Against Colotes: A Lesson in History of Philosophy*, was published in 2011.

Frieda Klotz did a DPhil at Oxford University on the self-presentation of intellectuals in the second century CE; she held a non-stipendiary fellowship at Wolfson College, and then taught for two years at King's College London, before moving into journalism. She is now based in New York, where she lives in Brooklyn and works as a freelance reporter and cultural critic.

David H.J. Larmour is Paul Whitfield Horn Professor of Classics at Texas Tech University, United States. Since 2008, he has been the editor of the *American Journal of Philology*. His research interests are classical language and literature (Greek and Latin), comparative literature (Russian, French, and English), and literary theory. His major publications include: *Russian Literature and the Classics* (1996), *Rethinking Sexuality: Foucault and Classical Antiquity* (1998), *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel, "True Histories": Interpretation and Commentary* (1998), *Stage and Stadium: Drama and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (1999), *Discourse and Ideology in Nabokov's Prose* (2002), and *The Sites of Rome: Time, Space, Memory* (2007).

Judith Mossman is Professor of Classics at the University of Nottingham, UK. She has published two books on Euripides (*Wild Justice: A Study of Euripides' Hecuba*, 1995; *Euripides: Medea*, 2010) and an edited volume (*Plutarch and his Intellectual World*, 1997) and a number of articles on Plutarch.

Stephen T. Newmyer is Professor of Classics and Chairman of the Department of Classics at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States. He has published a monograph on the *Silvae* of Statius and numerous studies in ancient science, medical theory, and animal lore, with particular emphasis on Plutarch's views on animals as ethical beings.

Anastasios G. Nikolaidis (PhD, King's College London) is Professor of Classics at the University of Crete, Greece. His research interests concern Plutarch and biography, Greek and Roman historiography, Greek and Roman ethics, and Latin love elegy. Most of his publications, including an edited volume on *The Unity of Plutarch's Work* (2008) and a commentary on *Seneca's Epistle 90* (2002), are on Plutarch, but he has also published articles on Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Roman historians, Lucretius, and Ovid. Professor Nikolaidis is currently president of the International Plutarch Society (2011–2014).

Jan Opsomer, previously at the University of South Carolina and the University of Cologne, is currently Professor of Philosophy at the University of Leuven, Belgium. He has published articles and books on the history of ancient Platonism. More particularly, his research interests include Plutarch, Proclus, Simplicius, and ancient philosophy of nature.

Marianne Pade is Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Aarhus, Denmark. She has published numerous articles and a two-volume monograph on the reception of Plutarch. She is secretary of the International Association of neo-Latin Studies.

Pascal Payen is Professor of Greek History at the University of Toulouse II, France. He has published numerous books and articles on Greek historiography from Herodotus to Plutarch, and on contemporary and modern reception of antiquity, including: *Les Îles nomades. Conquérir et résister dans l'Enquête d'Hérodote* (1997), *Retrouver, imaginer, utiliser l'Antiquité* (2001), *Dictionnaire-Plutarque* (ed.) in Plutarque, *Vies parallèles* (ed. Fr. Hartog, 2001), *Que reste-t-il de l'éducation classique? Relire "le Marrou," Histoire de l'éducation dans l'Antiquité* (with J.-M. Pailler, 2004), *Droysen, Histoire de l'hellénisme* (new ed., 2005), "Les Autorités". *Dynamiques et mutations d'une figure de référence à l'Antiquité* (with D. Foucault, 2007), and *Les revers de la guerre en Grèce ancienne. Histoire et historiographie* (2012). He is also editor of the journal *Anabases. Traditions et réceptions de l'Antiquité*.

Christopher Pelling is Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford University, UK. His writings on Plutarch include commentaries on Antony (1988), Philopoemen-Flamininus (translated into Italian by Francesca Albini, 1997), and Caesar (2011); 18 of his articles were collected in *Plutarch and History* (2002). His other publications include *Literary Texts and the Greek Historian* (2000), and he edited collections on *Characterization and Individuality in Greek Literature* (1990) and *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (1997); he also co-edited *Festschriften* for Donald Russell (*Ethics and Rhetoric*, co-edited with Doreen Innes and Harry Hine, 1995) and Tony Woodman (*Ancient Historiography and its Contexts*, co-edited with Christina Kraus and John Marincola, 2010). He was president of the International Plutarch Society between 2008 and 2011.

Aurelio Pérez Jiménez is Full Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Malaga, Spain. He has translated into Spanish some of Plutarch's *Lives* and has published numerous articles and chapters on Plutarch. He is the founder and president of the Spanish Plutarch Society, was the third president of the International Plutarch Society, and is currently Coordinator of Composition of *Ploutarchos*, n.s.

Carl J. Richard (PhD, Vanderbilt University, 1988) is Professor of History at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette, United States. His research and teaching focus on early national American history and US intellectual history. His books include *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (1994), *Twelve Greeks and Romans Who Changed the World* (2003), *The Battle for the American Mind: A Brief History of a Nation's Thought* (2004), *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts: How the Ancients Inspired the Founding Fathers* (2008), *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (2009), and *Why We're All Romans: The Roman Contribution to the Western World* (2010).

Geert Roskam is Associate Professor of Greek Studies at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. He is the author of monographs on Stoicism and Middle Platonism (2005), Epicureanism (2007), and Plutarch (2007, 2009), and has published many articles on different aspects of Plutarch's philosophical position.

Maria Teresa Schettino is Professor of Roman History at the University of Haute-Alsace, France, and a member of UMR 7044 (Strasbourg-Mulhouse). She has published widely in the fields of Roman history and Greek historiography of the Imperial Age. She has lately co-edited with Sylvie Pittia *Les sons du pouvoirs dans les mondes anciens* (2011). Some of her publications (articles and chapters) focus on the *Lives* of Plutarch, namely the biographies of the Late Roman Republic personalities.

Thomas A. Schmitz studied classics, French, and comparative literature at Bonn, Paris, and Harvard. He taught classics at Kiel, Heidelberg, and Frankfurt. Since 2003, he has been Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the University of Bonn, Germany, and is one of the founding members of the Bonn Center for the Classical Tradition. He has published books and articles on many aspects of Greek literature and its reception; his most recent contributions include *Modern Literary Theory and Ancient Texts: An Introduction* (Blackwell, 2007), "Epigrammatic Communication in Callimachus' Epigrams," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 50 (2010), "Homerische Poetik," in Antonios Rengakos and Bernhard Zimmermann (eds.), *Homer Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung* (2011), and the edited volume (with Nicolas Wiater) *The Struggle for Identity: Greeks and Their Past in the First Century BCE* (2011). His main areas of interest are Imperial Greek literature, literary theory, and its application to classical literature, and the reception of classics.

Carmen Soares is Associate Professor of Classical Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal. She has translated into Portuguese works by Herodotus, Euripides, and Plato. In addition to other articles and books on different themes in Greek culture and history, she has also published several articles on Plutarch in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Philip A. Stadter is Professor of Classics Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States, where he has taught since 1962. He has published extensively on Greek historical authors such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plutarch, and Arrian. His books include *Plutarch's Historical Methods* (1965), *The Public Library of Renaissance Florence: Niccolò Niccoli, Cosimo de' Medici and the Library of San Marco* (1972, with B.L. Ullman), *The Speeches in Thucydides* (1973), *Arrian of Nicomedia* (1980), *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles* (1989), *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (1992), and *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)* (2002, with L. Van der Stockt).

Frances B. Titchener is Professor of History and Classics at Utah State University in Logan, Utah, United States. She has written and lectured extensively on Plutarch and biography, and will soon publish her commentary on Plutarch's *Life of Nicias*. She is co-editor of the journal *Ploutarchos*, and serves as secretary for the International Plutarch Society.

Michael Trapp is Professor of Greek Literature and Thought at King's College London. He has published extensively on philosophizing writers of the Roman Imperial period, including Dio Chrysostom, Lucian, Aristides, and Maximus of Tyre as well as Plutarch; his study *Philosophy in the Roman Empire* appeared in 2007.

Georgia Tsouvala is Assistant Professor of History at Illinois State University, United States. She received her BA from Hunter College and her PhD in Classics from the Graduate School and University Center, CUNY. Her most recent publication examines the institution of marriage as a reflection of Plutarch's ideology of concord for the Roman Empire. She has presented numerous papers on Plutarch and on women in the Greek East.

Luc Van der Stockt is Professor of Greek Language and Literature at the KU Leuven, Belgium, where he teaches Greek grammar, drama, rhetoric, lyrics, and ancient literary criticism. His research focuses on the work of Plutarch on whom he published *Twinkling and Twilight: Plutarch's Reflections on Literature* (1992) and numerous contributions in journals and proceedings.

Lieve Van Hoof is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Ghent, Belgium. Her main research interest is the social role of literary culture within the political context of the Roman Empire from the first to the fourth century CE. As well as numerous articles, she has written a monograph entitled *Plutarch's Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy* (2010), and is currently editing a volume on Libanius.

Alexei V. Zadorojnyi (PhD, University of Exeter, 1999) is Senior Lecturer in Greek Language and Literature at the University of Liverpool, UK. His fields of research include Greek historiography and biography (with the major focus on Plutarch), Greco-Roman literary criticism and intertextuality, ancient ethics, and the relationships between literary culture and its written medium. He is co-editing, with Frances Titchener, the *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch*.

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Note on the Translations and Abbreviations

All translations in this volume are by the authors themselves unless otherwise indicated. All abbreviations of classical authors' names and works used in this volume follow the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition, edited by Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford, 2012).

Introduction

Plutarch in Greece

Mark Beck

Lucius Mestrius Plutarchus (*c.* 45–*c.* 125 CE), whom we know simply as Plutarch, lived at a time when Rome dominated the Mediterranean world politically and militarily. The glory days of Greece, the Persian Wars, and Alexander the Great's Macedonian Empire belonged to the distant past. The influence of Greek literary culture remained strong, however, and even experienced a type of renaissance, the so-called Second Sophistic. Plutarch was arguably the most important Greek intellectual in this movement (Swain (1996) 135; Schmitz). He is generally considered to be the ancient world's foremost biographer and philosophical essayist. His most widely read and influential work is undoubtedly the collection of forty-eight biographies entitled *Parallel Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans*.¹ This work, based broadly on the heuristic principle of comparison (*synkrisis*), explores the constitutive elements of individual greatness in politics and warfare, the two realms of activity that served as the proving grounds for male virtue (*areté*) in the ancient world.

With the rediscovery of his works in the Renaissance through translations by Leonardo Bruni (Pade), Jacques Amyot (Guerrier), and Sir Thomas North (Braden and Mossman), Plutarch became the most widely read and influential classical author in Europe. The list of those whom he has influenced is long and contains many illustrious names of individuals from all walks of life: Erasmus, Machiavelli, Rabelais, Vasari, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Bacon, Walton, Dryden, Rousseau, Johnson, Boswell, Beethoven, Goethe, Schiller, Alfieri, Hamilton, Macaulay, Nietzsche, Emerson, Strachey, Truman, and Foucault to name just a few (Braden, Frazier, Mossman, Pérez Jiménez, Richard). In Plutarch's writings his readers discovered the most accessible compendium of Hellenic thought and Greco-Roman history, rich in personal detail, anecdotes, and *bons mots*. The West for centuries saw its classical past primarily through the eyes of Plutarch.

1. Plutarch's Early Life

Plutarch was born and educated in Chaeronea, a small village located about sixty-seven miles northwest of Athens, as the crow flies (Bowie). He speaks with warmth of his family, his wife Timoxena, his father Autobulus, his grandfather Lamprias, for whom he expresses special admiration, and his brothers Timon and Lamprias. He deeply loved his wife Timoxena and their five children, only two of whom survived into adulthood. We have the *Consolation to his Wife* (608A–612B) that he wrote after the death of their only daughter at the age of two. It remains a moving testimonial to his love of family. His views on his own marriage can be summed up in one of his memorable quotes: “Very fortunate is the man who in the entire span of his life knows from the beginning only one woman, the one whom he marries” (*Cat. Min.* 7.3). Plutarch’s thoughts on marriage, women, and sexuality have attracted considerable attention of late (e.g., Foucault (1984); Nikolaidis (1997); Pomeroy (1999); Walcot (1999); Beneker (2012); Tsouvala and Beneker).

Informally his education was augmented by conversations at the dinner table with his family, relatives, and circle of friends (*De tuend. san.* 133E). We are able to acquire an approximate idea of what these evening sessions may have been like from reading Plutarch’s lengthy *Table Talks* (*Quaest. conv.* 612C–748D; Klotz (2007); Ribeiro Ferreira et al. (2009); Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011); Klotz). Some historical details he learned in this way have been incorporated into his works. Plutarch heard, for example, from his great-grandfather Nicarchus that Mark Antony virtually enslaved the freeborn Greeks of Chaeronea by forcing them with whips to carry grain to the harbor, after having taken their money, slaves, and yoke-animals (*Ant.* 68.4). From his grandfather Lamprias he learned of an eyewitness report (relayed by one Philotas, a physician from Amphissa) illustrating the inordinate luxury of Antony and Cleopatra’s dinner feasts (*Ant.* 28.2–3). The dramatic and unfortunate story of Damon, whose murder led to the haunting of the vapor-bath, was part of the oral tradition in Chaeronea until Plutarch used it to introduce his *Lives of Cimon and Lucullus* (Beck (2007)). Such memorable details gleaned from oral tradition appear frequently in the *Lives* and enrich our historical perspective, telling us something about the life of a young man growing up in Chaeronea.

At the age of twenty he went to Athens and resided for a time there. He later returned to the city at an interval of thirty years (*De sera* 559B). His intimate knowledge of the city and its environs is frequently displayed in the *Parallel Lives* (e.g. *Sol.* 25.1; *Per.* 13; *Arist.* 27.1). As he informs us in *De E ap. Delphos* 1(385B), it was in Athens that he studied with the Egyptian philosopher Ammonius who was head of the Platonic Academy there at the time when Nero visited Greece (66/67 CE) (Dillon).

2. History and Topographies of Memory

History and all things historical held a particular fascination for Plutarch (Payen). He had read and absorbed the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Theopompus, Polybius, Sallust, Livy, and many other historians (Schettino). He was not an uncritical reader as we know from his essay *The Malice of Herodotus* and the prologue to the *Life of Nicias* (*De mal. Her.* 854E–874C; *Nic.* 1; Bowen (1992) 1–13). Undoubtedly his

interest in biography arose out of his immersion in historical literature, since ancient political biography is an offshoot or *genus proximum* of ancient historiography, and he felt compelled to distinguish his biographical form of narrative from historiography (*Alex.* 1; Geiger (1985) 22; Burridge (1992) and (1997) 371–391). But Plutarch was more than just a man of his books. He had visited many places that were the sites of significant events. His own birthplace elegantly represented the stimulating intersection of history, topography, and memory.

As a boy growing up in Chaeronea not far from the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi he would have had ample opportunity to walk the plain between the city and the Kephissos River. His thoughts would likely have turned to one of his greatest heroes, the Macedonian king Alexander the Great, who personally took part in the battle of Chaeronea on August 2 in 338 BCE. In his biography of the Macedonian king written in his mature adulthood, Plutarch informs us about the oak tree (“Alexander’s oak”) under which Alexander pitched his tent that stood near the Kephissos River not far from the Macedonian *polyandreion* that has been rediscovered by archaeological investigation in modern times (*Alex.* 9.3; Buckler (1992) 4802; Ma (2008) 73–78). He then may also have reflected on the Roman general Sulla and the second battle of Chaeronea in 86 BCE, in which the forces of Mithridates VI Eupator, king of the Pontus, led by his general Archelaos, were vanquished. His *Life of Sulla* (15–21) contains a careful account of the battle rich in topographical details that provides “indisputable evidence of Plutarch’s autopsy to augment his literary sources” (Buckler (1992) 4803). Even the story of Damon’s crimes and murder, mentioned above, ultimately necessitated the personal intervention of Lucius Lucullus, a very notable historical figure, on behalf of the citizens of Chaeronea. This seemingly insignificant incident in local history thus eventually led to the Roman statesman and general being regarded as the savior of Chaeronea. As a result the citizens of Chaeronea honored Lucullus with a marble statue erected in the marketplace and Plutarch in turn, years later, sought to honor him with a literary monument by including him in his pantheon of heroes opposite Cimon, who for his part had helped to save the day for the Athenians during the Second Persian War (*Cim.* 1.5–2.5). The intertwining of Greek with Roman history was a natural part of his world, throughout his youth and adulthood, and explains in part the Greco-Roman format of the *Parallel Lives* (see also Geiger (1985) and Ramón Palerm (1992) on the influence of Cornelius Nepos). His residence in Athens brought him close to the most significant series of events that influenced Greek history.

While the Second Punic War contested with Hannibal figured as the turning point for the Romans in their history, the Persian Wars in contrast represented Greece’s watershed moment. Plutarch displays an acute awareness of the historical magnitude of these events in his descriptions of the nearby battle sites, as he gazed at the memorials to the fallen (Pelling (2007) 150–151). He describes for us in vivid sensory detail his visit to the small temple of “East-looking” Artemis he saw there and how after he rubbed his hands on the blocks of white marble on the ground there they assumed a “saffron-like color and smell” (*Them.* 8.2–3). He records the inscription that he read on one of those marble slabs:

There was a time when on this stretch of sea the sons of Athens
In battle overcame a varied host of men of Asian stock;
To mark their destruction of the army of the Medes,
They erected these tokens in honor of the maiden Artemis.²

He also visited Thermopylae, the site of the majestic last stand of the 300 Spartans under the command of their king, Leonidas. His first-hand knowledge of Thermopylae, revealed in his descriptions of the topography and vegetation in the *Life of Cato the Elder*, gives us an idea of what his more elaborate account in the unwritten or lost *Life of Leonidas* would have been like (*Cat. Mai.* 13–14). Sparta obviously fascinated him as it had Plato (Rawson (1969); Tigerstedt (1974) 226–264; Talbert (2005)). His *Lives* of Lysurgus, Lysander, Agesilaus, and Agis and Cleomenes are notable as rich sources of Spartan history providing us with a great store of information about Spartan education and institutions. He had visited Sparta to consult the public archives, and seen king Agesilaus' spear on display there (*Ages.* 19.11–12; Buckler (1992) 4814–4815). He witnessed the ritual whipping of Spartan youths at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, many of whom were whipped to death, as he grimly notes (*Lyc.* 18.2).

His visits to sites in Italy enable him to better understand his Latin sources, a language he tells us he never completely mastered (*Dem.* 2.2–4; see Stadter). First-hand experience enabled him to compare the splendor of Athens with the magnificence of Rome and come down squarely on the side of Periclean Athens (*Comp. Per.-Fab.* 3.5). These instances of autopsy, and many more, in Plutarch's writings are compelling and enhance the value and interest of his narrative for us. The importance of cities, monuments, and artifacts correlates with people and the doing of great deeds (*erga/praxeis*) in his cognitive universe.

3. *Erga* and Aesthetics

The purest and most lucid expression of the psychological importance of seminal achievement is to be found in the prologue to his *Life of Pericles* (1–2). The key to unlocking human potential, according to Plutarch, involves exposure to edifying auditory and visual stimuli (*akousmata kai theamata*). This is not a passive reception of visual and auditory stimuli but an active and analytical process achieved by selective application of the intellect (*nous/dianoia*) to the desirable types of experience that elicit imitation and emulation. The appropriate objects of contemplation, according to Plutarch, are virtuous deeds/works (*en tois ap' arêtes ergois*). The meaning of *ergon* (pl. *erga*) shifts subtly in this section of the prologue, in that it refers to an action as well as the physical, tangible result of an action.³ This prologue explains the powerful psychological effect that contemplation of superlative deeds can have as well as the commemorative structures associated with those deeds. Its direct role in the *Life* is to condition the reader for an enhanced appreciation of the Periclean constructions on the Acropolis that are presented in detail (*Per.* 12–13). The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope finds fruitful application under such circumstances, as Plutarch recreates the landscape and buildings of Athens and Rome, in expressing “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” (Bakhtin (1981) 84; see Banta (2006), (2007a), (2007b); Beck (2012)). Numerous chronotopes appear as focalizing devices in the *Lives* and reflect strongly on the character and achievement of the biographical subject.

It has been noted that, in addressing the role of deeds (*erga*) and of *mimesis* in instilling the desire to behave virtuously, Plutarch exploits in this prologue the semantic ambiguity of the terms *ergon*, *mimesis*, *historia*, and *ethopoia*, as he “links and merges the activity

of the heroes of the past, of the writer and of the reader” (Duff (2001) 353). Thus a third meaning of *ergon* in this context is that it refers to the work of literature itself that represents (*mimesis*) deeds worthy of imitation (*mimesis*). The representation of character (*ethopoia*) serves the proper formation of character (*ethopoia*). The correct appreciation of historical literature (*historia*) requires investigation (*historia*) of an analytical nature. Timothy Duff ((2001) 356) persuasively links the activities represented by the term *historia* with a passage in the treatise *On the Sign of Socrates* (575B–C) that represents the ideal reader as one who “looks at” and studies history carefully, like an art connoisseur. The difference being that Plutarch expects his narrative will compel action in the form of emulation. As in the case of Plato, there exists in Plutarch’s thought a close connection between ethics and aesthetics (on this connection in Plato see Hobbs (2000) 66; for Plutarch see Duff (1999) and (2004)). The frequent reference to vision in the prologue is employed “as a parallel for the activity of the mind” (Stadter (1989) 55). The placement of vivid “images of excellence” before the mind’s eye of the narratee is designed to elicit an emotional response that renders them more memorable, thus enhancing their didactic efficacy (Mueller (1995) 287–300). The close association of emotion and virtue is Aristotelian (Becchi), and is one of the fundamental points of disagreement between Plutarch’s philosophical position and Stoicism (Opsomer). The link between aesthetics and the representation of character is brought out in the prologue to the *Life of Lucullus*, wherein Plutarch acknowledges that “a portrait which reveals character and disposition is far more beautiful than one which merely copies form and feature” (*Cim.* 2.3). The literary likeness (*eikon*) he composes to honor Lucullus is thus aesthetically more satisfying in that it is capable of revealing character (*ethos*) and disposition (*tropos*).

4. Characterization, Individuality, and the Condensation of Knowledge

The moralizing tendency of Plutarch’s method of characterization in the *Lives* is now well established (Pelling (1995), (2002) 237–251, 283–338; Frazier (1996); Duff (1999); Nikolaidis). While his biographical subjects differ from one another in possessing their own unique set of attributes, and a certain degree of individuality, their behavior nevertheless seems to be evaluated according to the same identifiable register of traits (Bucher-Isler (1972); Gill (1983), (1990); Pelling (2002) 283–338). The thematic correspondence between the *Lives* and the ethical and political treatises in the *Moralia* is particularly pronounced in this regard (see, e.g., the contributions in de Blois et al. (2004–2005) and Nikolaidis (2008)). Plutarch’s hierarchical system of valuation ranks human achievement according to its degree of ontological dependency. That is to say he regards more highly those individuals who are doers of deeds (including statements) than those who write about or represent them (see, e.g., *De glor. Ath.* 345F). He is fond of quoting Homer’s verse (*Il.* 9.443) in his major political treatises that stipulates one should strive to “be a speaker of speeches, and also a doer of actions” (*Prae. ger. reip.* 798B; *An seni* 795E). The individuals who actively embody this ideal of civic commitment are political and military leaders (see Pelling). The ultimate goal of talented individuals was to serve their communities in a political capacity, however diminished that role may

have been in light of Roman political hegemony (see Trapp 2004). This is what Plutarch himself chose to do and in this he diverges significantly from the Epicureans (see Kechagia-Ovseiko).

On the other hand he also wanted his readers to experience these men as people that could be identified with. Excessive idealization was thus avoided. Instead he endeavors to break down the distance between his subjects and his readers (narratees) and render a more intimate portrait that we can examine and identify with, at least in part. The metaphor that he uses is that of a mirror (Zadorojnyi (2010); Frazier (2011); Geiger). Such identification and comparison of one's self with others leads to self-discovery and moral improvement (see Larmour on *synkrisis* in this volume). It is apparent that Plutarch viewed the apophthegm as a didactically important way of condensing knowledge and vivifying his portraits to render people and situations more thought-provoking and proximate, and to stimulate ambition and emulation (Beck (2010)). He clearly appreciated laconic brevity in speaking and his apophthegm collections contain much Spartan material, including sayings attributed to women (*Mor.* 172B–242D; see König (2010)). Many of the apophthegms in these collections appear in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, and the relationship of these collections to Plutarch's compositional methods is an ongoing question (Van der Stockt (1999); Pelling (2002) 65–90; Stadter (2008); see Van der Stockt and Zadorojnyi). There is a strong likelihood that he even sent the emperor Trajan a copy of his *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* as a sort of breviarium of the *Lives*, which the busy man did not have the leisure time to read (Beck (2002)). If correct, this would attest to Plutarch's views on the edifying value of apophthegms.

5. Plutarch in Chaeronea

As he himself tells us, Plutarch looked into the mirror he had created and lived his life accordingly (*Aem.* 1). Despite traveling widely, visiting Greece, Macedonia, Crete, Italy (including Rome), Northern Egypt, and parts of Asia Minor (Buckler (1992) 4799–4800), Plutarch's home remained his beloved Chaeronea, and in the prologue to his *Life of Demosthenes* (2.2) he expresses his desire to live there that “it may not become even smaller.” He was politically active in Chaeronea, he served on embassies to proconsuls, accepted municipal posts, and oversaw local building projects. As a sign of his literary repute he was bestowed with the *ornamenta consularia*. Young people gathered in his home for instruction in philosophy and mathematics. Notably he also became priest of the nearby sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi for a number of years (“many Pythiads”) (*An seni* 792F). We do not know in what year Plutarch died. According to Eusebius, Plutarch was appointed Procurator of Achaia in 119 CE and none of his writings contain references beyond this date. At his death the people of Chaeronea and Delphi erected a portrait bust in his honor (see Jones (1971)).

6. The Contents and Scope of this Volume

This volume brings together contributions from noted authorities around the world in the hope of doing justice to Plutarch's immense literary and intellectual legacy. The first section (Part I) locates Plutarch in his literary and cultural milieu, his connection with

Rome (Stadter), the Second Sophistic (Schmitz), and philosophy in the Imperial period (Trapp). In Part II, Plutarch's voluminous *Moralia*, comprising seventy-eight essays, declamations, and dialogues, and spurious works, comes under discussion. The contributions of Dillon, Becchi, Opsomer, Kechagia-Osveiko, Bonazzi, Van Hoof, and Pelling explore all aspects of Plutarch's philosophical thought. This is currently one of the premier areas of investigation in Plutarch studies and the chapters assembled here provide a comprehensive overview of the field. Plutarch's religiosity is closely associated with his philosophical thought and Hirsch-Luipold's contribution focuses on religion and myth in his writings. Along with Plato, Plutarch was one of the ancient world's foremost philosophical mythmakers. Education was one of Plutarch's primary concerns and Bowie's contribution explores this aspect of his thought. As a sign of his undying relevancy, Plutarch's advocacy of poetry in the instruction of children has been recently taken up again by Martha Nussbaum (1996). The four contributions by Tsouvala, Klotz, Newmyer, and Payen expose more personal and idiosyncratic aspects of Plutarch's thought, his views on love and marriage, his portraits of *symposia*, his high regard and love for animals, and his antiquarianism.

The third section (Part III) of this work comprehensively presents Plutarch's biographical oeuvre, fifty-two biographies in all. Forty-eight of these biographies contrast a Greek with a Roman protagonist (or in one instance two Greeks, Agis and Cleomenes, with two Romans, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus). This work, entitled the *Parallel Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans*, is generally regarded as Plutarch's *magnum opus*. Of the four remaining biographies, two, the *Lives* of Galba and Otho, belong to his earlier large-scale biographical work, the *Lives of the Emperors*, and two independent biographies, the *Lives* of Aratus and Artaxerxes, that were not part of any larger collection, as far as we know. The chapters by Georgiadou and De Blois deal with the *Lives of the Emperors*, while Almagor focuses on the *Lives* of Aratus and Artaxerxes. The remaining contributions focus primarily on Plutarch's compositional techniques (Geiger, Zadorojnyi, Van der Stockt, Duff, Larmour, Cooper), use of historical sources (Schettino), and various salient themes in the *Lives*: childhood (Soares), characterization and morality (Nikolaidis), tragedy (Mossman), philosopher-king (Boulet), Socratic paradigm (Beck), fate and fortune (Titchener), ambition (Frazier), sex, eroticism, and politics (Beneker), and philanthropy, dignity, and euergetism (Roskam).

The fourth and final section of this volume (Part IV) traces the early reception of Plutarch from late antiquity to the Italian Renaissance (Pade), as well as his influence in France (Guerrier and Frazier), in Spain (Pérez Jiménez), in England (Braden and Mossman), and in the early history of the United States of America (Richard).

NOTES

- 1 Citations of the *Lives* in the Introduction follow the Loeb Classical Library edition by Bernadotte Perrin.
- 2 Translation by Waterfield (1998).
- 3 This ambiguous usage of *ergon* is already present in Herodotus (see Immerwahr (1960) 261–290).

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PART I

Plutarch in Context

CHAPTER 1

Plutarch and Rome

Philip A. Stadter

1. A Greek in a Roman World

No man more successfully bridged the two classical cultures, Greek and Roman, than Plutarch. His crowning achievement, the *Parallel Lives*, testifies to the dignity and intrinsic worth of the two nations, comparing their heroes and their history. His sense of the contribution that each made to his own world, and would continue to make, won him fame in his own time and has made him a favorite window to the classical world ever since. How did this Greek learn to speak of Rome so effectively?

When Plutarch was born, his home, Chaeronea, had been subject to Romans for more than two centuries. Chaeronea had been a battleground of Greek independence. Here the Thebans, Athenians, and other Greeks had fought against Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander, vainly, in 338 BCE. Here in 86 BCE Sulla had defeated the forces of Mithridates of Pontus, who was trying to force the Romans to abandon Greece. Sulla's success assured that Rome would continue to rule Greece, as it had since the victories of Flamininus at Cynoscephalae in 197 and Aemilius Paullus at Pydna in 168. Plutarch could point to the monuments of the two battles and see the combatants' weapons dug up from the fields.

At times Roman domination could be oppressive. Chaeronea was almost destroyed when a proud young man rejected the advances of a Roman officer; it was saved by the intervention of Lucullus, an officer of Sulla's (Plut. *Cim.* 1–2). Family tradition recalled that Plutarch's great-grandfather had had to carry on his back grain to supply Antony's forces at Actium in 31 (Plut. *Ant.* 68.6–8). That war had established the dynasty that would end in Plutarch's day with the death of Nero and the civil war of 69 CE. Roman rule for Plutarch was a given, but the stability of its government and the benevolence of its rulers was never assured.

His language, his rhetorical and philosophical education, his historical and literary heritage, and later his position as priest at Apollo's ancient shrine at Delphi bound him intellectually and culturally to a millennium of Greek tradition. His voracious reading in Greek literature, history, and philosophy, in particular Plato, continued throughout his life and is evident in every page he wrote. Plutarch is one of the earliest figures of the Greek literary renaissance that would flower in the second century CE.¹ Unlike his contemporary, Dio of Prusa, he chose to present himself as a philosopher rather than an orator. In addition, his deep familiarity with Rome's history and institutions set him apart from other contemporary Greek intellectuals.

Plutarch as a young man decided to engage with Rome and with individual Romans, with extraordinary success. His teacher at Athens, Ammonius, whose significant civic office as Herald of the Areopagus required regular contact with imperial officials, may have introduced the notion. A crucial stimulus might have been Nero's trip to Greece in 68 CE, accompanied by leading figures of the court, including the future emperor Vespasian. Plutarch writes of attending the games at Delphi where Nero was competing, along with his teacher Ammonius (Plut. *De E* 385B). It would have been a good occasion for Plutarch, now in his twenties, to meet prominent Romans. He had perhaps already served as envoy to the proconsul of Achaia (*Prae. ger. reip.* 816CD). Within two years Vespasian had claimed the title of emperor in Alexandria: Plutarch may have journeyed there with an embassy to salute him.² Either in Greece or in Alexandria he seems to have met a close associate of the new emperor's, the senator L. Mestrius Florus. Florus became a friend and patron to the young philosopher, and at some point obtained him Roman citizenship, with the name L. Mestrius Ploutarchos.³ Plutarch would have entered the equestrian class: his education, public service, and Roman citizenship bear witness to his belonging to a prosperous family.⁴ When Plutarch traveled to Rome, sometime in Vespasian's reign, but probably in the early 70s, Florus had him accompany him to northern Italy. In his biography of Otho, Plutarch proudly writes that Florus, a consular, had shown him the battlefield of Bedriacum, where he himself had fought for Otho, and Otho's monument at Brixellum.⁵ This association with Florus was to be extremely important to him, for it meant that he had someone who could introduce him to other leading senators and, most importantly, speak of him to the emperor.⁶

2. Visiting Rome: The Immersion Experience

This first journey to Rome would have combined three purposes: to augment his reputation in the society of the capital as a philosopher and speaker, to represent his fellow citizens in Boeotia or Delphi at the court, and to enlarge his circle of Roman friends.⁷ "While I was in Rome and other parts of Italy," Plutarch tells us, "I did not have leisure to practice the Latin language on account of political business and people coming for philosophy" (Plut. *Dem.* 2.2). Apparently he gave lectures on philosophical topics, as did Euphrates, a philosopher whom the younger Pliny heard and admired.⁸ These no doubt would have been in Greek. Florus was probably among his listeners, for Plutarch later recalls his interest in philosophical debates and his regular celebration of the birthdays of Socrates and Plato. Another Roman contact, Julius Secundus, who also had served with Otho, became a much admired speaker during Vespasian's reign.⁹

Plutarch does not define further his political business in Rome, but it may well have concerned Delphi, since Vespasian granted that city the right to remain free and autonomous, as well as other privileges. Possibly he also negotiated the appointment of Vespasian's son Titus as archon, or chief magistrate, at Delphi, a considerable honor for that city. Titus held the position while emperor in 79/80 CE, the year of the quadrennial Pythian games.¹⁰

His stay in Rome also gave Plutarch the opportunity to achieve reading and probably speaking fluency in Latin.¹¹ Plutarch was already able to read Latin historical authors with some ease at the time of the composition of the *Lives of the Caesars*, which, as will be discussed below, was probably in the mid-70s, when he would have been in his late twenties or early thirties. This work required extensive use of Roman sources, at least one of which was significant enough to be used later by Tacitus and Suetonius.¹² Plutarch may have begun his study of Latin in Chaeronea or Athens, then continued more intensively after he resolved to expand his interests toward Rome. Much later, he would write, "I began to read Roman works late and when advanced in age" (*Dem.* 2.2), an indication that he did not begin his second language from his earliest years, as was preferred by educators like Quintilian, but after he had already been reading Greek for some time. His wide reading in Greek literature as an adolescent and his early experience on embassies prepared him to understand the Latin texts he was confronting. As he goes on to say, "It happened that I followed along the words from the circumstances, insofar as I had some experience of them, rather than understood and recognized the circumstances from the words." But as for the finer points of Ciceronian prose style, he professed ignorance. "I think it charming and pleasurable to perceive the beauty and rapidity of Latin delivery and the stylistic figures and rhythms and the other features in which it glories, but practice and exercising for this purpose was not convenient: that is more for those whose greater leisure and suitable age permit such ambitions" (*Dem.* 2.4). This self-deprecatory confession that his Latin did not reach the high standard which he had attained in Greek also intimates that he had better things to do while in Rome than perfect the finer points of Latin rhetorical language.¹³ The study of the errors in Plutarch's paraphrases of Latin texts has been significant for establishing his acquaintance with the originals and the relative accuracy of his notices.¹⁴ But it has sometimes led to a rather pedantic evaluation of his ability to read Latin. As Hartmut Erbse has remarked, scholars tend to treat him as if he were a high school student.¹⁵ Even those who think that he read widely in Latin tend to speak of his difficulties in reading, rather than his ease and rapidity. On the contrary, his extensive use of Roman historians in the *Caesars*, and later in the *Parallel Lives* and other works, proves his ease with the language.¹⁶

Plutarch's knowledge of Latin, as well as conversations with his Roman friends, gave him access to a fuller spectrum of Roman culture than he would have had in Greece. This is manifest in his declamation *On the Fortune of the Romans*, which most likely was delivered at Rome under Vespasian.¹⁷ The speech demonstrates an exceptional familiarity with major figures in Roman history, from Romulus to Augustus, compared, for example, to the orations on Rome of Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides. The Roman authors Valerius Antias and Livy are cited, while the scholar Varro seems to be the source for the list of the temples of Fortuna at Rome. He must have begun reading in these works, as well as the histories treating Augustus and succeeding emperors needed for the *Lives of*

the Caesars, while in Rome, or even before. At the same time, his personal contacts with Romans would have enriched his general knowledge of Roman customs, traditions, and practices. His trip to northern Italy with Florus gave him the opportunity to see recent battlefields and, probably, a statue of Marius erected in Ravenna (*Mar.* 2.1). No doubt Florus, Secundus, and others he encountered could tell him many stories not only of the terrible year 69, but of the reigns of Nero and earlier emperors to encourage and supplement his reading.¹⁸

Another work, the *Roman Questions*, written after the death of Domitian in 96 CE, draws heavily on the reading in Roman sources that underlay the *Parallel Lives*. The 112 short investigations span a broad spectrum of issues related to Roman practices and customs and furnish further evidence that Plutarch had immersed himself not only in Roman history but its antiquarian lore. Terentius Varro, already cited in *On the Fortune of Rome*, appears to have been an important source, as well as the Augustan scholar Verrius Flaccus.¹⁹ Here again, Plutarch may have drawn on oral sources as well. Remarkably, none of the Roman practices is interpreted as harmful or foolish. Rather, they are shown to be different from, but consonant with Greek practice and Greek philosophy. Occasionally Plutarch even prefers the Roman custom to the Greek. Overall, the Romans are seen as separate from the Greeks, but equally to be respected.

Over the years Plutarch seems to have made several trips to Rome, including a possible stay about 89, and another about 92.²⁰ After that the record is silent: Plutarch would have been over fifty, and perhaps less ready to travel, but Domitian's expulsion of philosophers from Rome and Italy in 93 or 94 may have kept him away. Again, service on embassies may have been one reason for his visits in the 80s and early 90s. He may have spoken on behalf of the Delphians before the emperor Domitian, who restored the great temple of Apollo in 84. The imposing inscription on the temple recording his gift is still preserved at Delphi.²¹ He continued as well to teach philosophy. He casually mentions a lecture he was delivering at Rome that was attended by Iunius Rusticus. Rusticus received a hand-delivered letter from Domitian, but preferred to hear the rest of the lecture before reading it. Plutarch admired Rusticus' Stoic restraint, but not long after Domitian had the senator, a consul in 92, executed. Rusticus had written a laudatory piece on Thræsea Paetus, who had been an outspoken critic of Nero and the author of a life of Cato, the great opponent of Caesar (*De cur.* 522DE; Tac. *Agr.* 2.1).

3. Roman Friends

Plutarch's repeated visits to Rome gave him occasion to meet other Roman friends, some of whom he would have known already from their service in Greece. He enjoyed a dinner with Avidius Quietus and Aufidius Modestus, when in summer 92 the former had just returned from serving as proconsul in Achaea.²² Quietus, like Rusticus, had philosophical interests and had been a friend of Thræsea Paetus. Quietus had been honored at Delphi, where it is likely he met Plutarch. He became suffect consul in 93, and later proconsul in Britain. Plutarch addressed his treatise *God's Slowness to Punish* to him, and *On Brotherly Love* to him and his brother Nigrinus. Aufidius Modestus was a literary scholar, believed to have written a commentary on Vergil's *Georgics*.

Our two chief sources for Plutarch's Roman friends, as for his Greek, are his dialogues, where he introduces them as interlocutors, and the dedications of his works. The nine books of *Table Talk*, recalling (and perhaps inventing) conversations at dinner in various Greek cities, are especially informative. They are dedicated to Sosius Senecio, as were the *Parallel Lives* and the treatise *On Progress in Virtue*. Sosius had shared many dinners with Plutarch in Greece, was a companion of his sons, and had been present at one son's wedding.²³ Plutarch had probably met this much younger man when Sosius had been quaestor in Greece in the 80s. Sosius' strong interests in philosophy did not impede his brilliant senatorial career. After aiding Trajan's ascent to the throne in 98 he was named ordinary consul in 99. He held high commands in Trajan's Dacian wars and won a second consulate in 107. Sosius' two consulships and intimacy with Trajan made him the most powerful of Plutarch's Roman friends.²⁴ He also seems to be Plutarch's ideal reader, one pursuing an active and significant political career, but concerned to apply philosophical reasoning in his life. *On Progress in Virtue* encourages Sosius, as addressee, to reject Stoic absolutism concerning virtue and to confidently observe the signs of his own moral progress.²⁵

Roman society was dominated by considerations of class and rank. Plutarch's friends belonged to the elite of the empire. In addition to Florus, Rusticus, Quietus, and Sosius, five other acquaintances held consular rank. The children of the two Avidii, the younger Quietus and Nigrinus, also known to Plutarch, both became consuls (in 111 and 110, respectively). The younger Nigrinus served as Trajan's special envoy to Achaea, and later as legate in Dacia. In 117 CE, at Trajan's death, he was important enough to be dangerous to Trajan's heir Hadrian, and so was one of the four consulars executed to ensure a smooth succession. Herennius Saturninus, a dinner companion and the dedicatee of *Against Colotes*, served as proconsul of Achaea, then suffect consul in 100 and legate of Upper Moesia. Minucius Fundanus, principal speaker of *On Control of Anger* and a close friend, held the consulship in 107. C. Julius Antiochus Epiphanes Philopappus, grandson of the last king of Commagene, held the consulship in 109. A fellow citizen of Athens and friend, his extraordinary monument, still standing opposite the Acropolis on the hill of the Muses, testifies to a dual allegiance. He is portrayed twice, both as an Athenian in Greek *himation* and as a Roman in consular toga, with his royal lineage inscribed in Greek and his Roman *cursus honorum* given in Latin. Philopappus expresses in his monument the same desire to respect and combine both cultures which we recognize behind Plutarch's biographies. Plutarch addresses to him *Friends and Flatterers*, a subtle discussion of social relations in which he presents himself as an equal to this immensely wealthy descendant of royalty. Most of this group of friends attained the peaks of their careers under Trajan, when Plutarch reached his sixties. It was for men like this, as well as his many Greek friends active in local and imperial government, for whom he wrote the *Parallel Lives*.²⁶

4. Evaluating Emperors, Past and Present

The emperor sat at the peak of Roman society. As we have seen, Plutarch may have had contact with Vespasian already in Alexandria and his friendship with Florus had connected him to Vespasian's inner circle. Strikingly, he immediately set to writing a collection of biographies of earlier emperors, perhaps with Florus' encouragement.

The work he composed, *Lives of the Caesars*, treated the eight emperors from Augustus to Vitellius, a period of roughly 100 years (31 BCE–69 CE).²⁷ This work is often given slight attention, since only two short lives are preserved, *Galba* and *Otho*, treating a portion of the year 69. Nevertheless, the project of reappraising such an extended period was enormously ambitious. The whole work would have run at least 375 modern pages, and perhaps 500 or more. The *Caesars* is also the first known work to have presented Roman history as a series of biographies, directing attention especially to the character and actions of the emperors. Suetonius and the authors of the *Historia Augusta* were to follow this practice, and even Tacitus organized his historical narratives according to the reigns of the emperors.

From the two extant lives, it is apparent that Plutarch wished to write history with a philosophical cast, giving attention to moral values and to general issues of just government, according to ethical principles found also in his essays and dialogues. Plutarch held the Platonic view that a monarch should be devoted to the welfare of his people and establish justice, harmony, and peace in his kingdom.²⁸ He presents Numa and Lycurgus as being just such kings, though in different ways. In *Dion*, he describes the ideal king, a ruler who

would conform his character to the principle of virtue and render it similar to the most divine and holy model of reality which guides the universe from disorder to order, and thus would procure great happiness for himself and his citizens. He would achieve by his paternal rule, through self-control and justice and with the good will of his subjects, what [before] had been obtained from their discouragement and oppression, so that he would be a king rather than a tyrant. (10.2–3)

The *Caesars* gave ample opportunity to examine how this vision played out in real life. In the proem to *Galba*, after citing Plato's *Republic* on the good ruler, Plutarch presents the situation during the civil war: troops out of control, heads severed from bodies, and stage tyrants entering and exiting one after another – the complete breakdown of rational government (1.3–8). The series began differently, perhaps. From the very few fragments we have of the lost lives, Augustus was portrayed as the opposite, at least once he had assumed sole power: a bringer of peace after the civil wars (in which he himself had acted as violently as any) and a ruler who knew self-restraint and respect for the law. At one point, many years after composing the *Caesars*, Plutarch wrote that Augustus' political acts "became much more kingly and helpful to the people toward the end of his life" (*An seni* 784D). Augustus, then, in mature age seemed a kingly ruler, in the Platonic sense, and the complete opposite of the wretched leaders portrayed in *Galba* and *Otho* at the end of the series. We can say little about the intervening emperors, but Plutarch had a low opinion of Nero. He rejoiced at Nero's proclamation of freedom for Greece in 68, but even so that only won the emperor's soul reincarnation, after dreadful agonies, as a frog in a swamp rather than as the viper his murder of his mother would demand.²⁹ It is reasonable to think that Plutarch, in describing the decline of rulers from the kingly Augustus to the tyrants of the civil war of 69, is looking forward to a new beginning in Vespasian's reign. The *Caesars* apparently projected Plutarch's hopes for a renewed Rome after the collapse under Nero and the disaster that followed his death, but he hardly held a utopian vision of the monarchy. The history of the emperors made it clear

enough that they bore little resemblance to Plato's philosopher-king. At the same time this history suggested to Plutarch himself and to his readers a need for the kind of moral training of the ruling class which a philosopher might provide, a subtle hint of Plutarch's own potential usefulness to Rome. Plato had been willing to travel to Sicily to put his abstract political theories into practice by educating the Syracusan tyrants. With the help of his Roman friends, Plutarch could dream of something similar, to educate the ruling class, and perhaps even the emperor, to rule wisely and humanely. The *Lives of the Caesars* were the first major step in that direction, employing historical biography to inspire political morality.

Whatever his hopes, Plutarch recognized that Vespasian had weaknesses. He criticized the emperor's harshness toward the wife of a Gallic rebel, the mother of a friend he knew in Delphi (*Amat.* 771C), but recognized his good fortune (*Publ.* 15.2). Plutarch's diplomacy may have helped persuade Titus to serve as archon and Domitian to restore Apollo's temple. Nevertheless, after his death, Plutarch criticized Domitian's excesses. Wryly he notes that Domitian named two months after himself, but not for long: "they resumed their names again after his assassination" (*Num.* 19.7).

In his *Publicola*, moreover, Plutarch criticizes Domitian for the extravagance of his new palace on the Palatine, even more costly than the new temple to Jupiter on the Capitoline, imagining that someone would say to Domitian, "You aren't pious or liberal, you are diseased: you delight in building; just like Midas you want everything to be in gold or stone" (*Publ.* 15.6). A passage of the companion life, *Solon*, suggests the philosopher's reaction to such display. Solon entered the court of Croesus, walking past courtiers and guards, up to the king himself, whose dress "lacked nothing that men regard as remarkable or extraordinary or desirable in the way of precious stones, dyed clothing, and wrought gold jewelry." But "Solon stood unmoved by the spectacle ... he actually despised the vulgarity and petty ostentation of it all" (*Sol.* 27.3–4). There is nothing of Herodotus in this description: the scene rather reflects Plutarch's own experience with Domitian in the Domus Flavia. Later in *Solon*, Plutarch describes Solon's willingness to advise Peisistratus, even though he opposed his tyranny. The implication is that a wise man should continue to try to influence even a tyrant, if it is possible. Plutarch here perhaps defends his own position *vis-à-vis* Domitian: not outright defiance, but doing what good one can.³⁰ Nevertheless, the *Parallel Lives* were not composed until after Domitian's death. Clearly Plutarch believed that Domitian's absolutism would not tolerate the freedom of judgment he had exercised in the *Caesars*.

There is no indication of a connection to Nerva, but several of his friends, especially Sosius Senecio, were quite close to Trajan. In addition, Plutarch appears to have written for Trajan a collection of historical anecdotes, the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*.³¹ The dedicatory letter, now thought to be genuine, recognizes that the author's lives may require more leisure than is available, and offers to the emperor "the first fruits of philosophy," "samples and seeds of the lives" of many famous men, material for the understanding of "the character and choices of leaders" (*Ap. Reg.* 172C–E). Perhaps Sosius had intimated that the emperor had little time to read history, but might enjoy some inspiration in the form of edifying anecdotes. The collection, in fact, contains only positive sayings, and concludes with Augustus, one of Trajan's models. Plutarch's letter explains how he expected his biographies would be read. "These expressions and utterances, like mirrors, give the opportunity to observe the mind of each statesman."³²

Sayings, like lives, give an insight into the thinking of the famous men, useful for the ruling elite of the empire, even the emperor. Nevertheless, the emperor's preference for a few short anecdotes over his well-researched and insightful biographies might well have left Plutarch discouraged. Even though Plutarch shared much of Trajan's ideology of rule, the emperor's mind appeared more focused on his Dacian and Parthian wars than on the moral values revealed in the *Lives*.³³

Whether through Sosius' influence, or Trajan's own initiative, Plutarch received from the emperor one of the highest honors given to Romans of the equestrian class, the *ornamenta consularia*.³⁴ This gave him consular rank and privileges such as wearing the *toga consularis* and seating with senators on public occasions. Less credible is another late notice reporting that Hadrian had made Plutarch an imperial procurator for Greece, though possibly this could refer to some kind of non-administrative oversight of the province.³⁵

5. Delphi and Rome

Sometime in the mid-90s Plutarch was chosen one of the Delphic sanctuary's two priests of Apollo, a post he would hold for over fifteen years, probably to his death.³⁶ A better platform from which to champion the heritage of Greek culture to Greeks and Romans could not be found.³⁷ Delphi had been a major religious center in archaic and classical times, but by Cicero's day had declined considerably. The emperors, beginning with Augustus, took steps to improve its position, promoting the sanctuary as a major element of the Roman conception of Greece. Augustus renewed the Amphictyonic council which governed the sanctuary; his wife Livia dedicated a great golden E to be hung on the façade of the temple. Claudius served as archon for Delphi, as did Titus later, and encouraged new colonists in the city. Nero on his visit competed in the Pythian games and made gifts to the city and sanctuary, but as usual, what he gave with one hand he took with the other. Domitian rebuilt the temple and imitated the Pythian games in his new Capitoline games at Rome.

Then, in the 90s, Delphi saw a remarkable period of construction, which included a fountain, an aqueduct, a house for the Pythia, and a library. Plutarch was confident that Delphi flourished as never before. "You all see for yourselves many new buildings where there were none before, and many ruined and desolate buildings now restored" (*De Pyth. or.* 409A). The major increase in building was no doubt helped by the donations of its Greek patrons, especially the friends of Plutarch named in this dialogue, but imperial gifts may have contributed as well. Finally, around 110, Trajan sent a pro-praetorian legate, Avidius Nigrinus the younger, son of the friend of Plutarch, to make a final settlement of a land dispute that affected the sanctuary's income. His judgment affirming earlier Roman decisions was inscribed prominently on the temple in a monumental bilingual inscription. The Greek and Latin parallel texts are arranged in six columns, running almost seven meters across. Nigrinus' comment reflects Plutarch's own desire for harmony under a beneficent ruler: "Even if the hope of each party was somewhat curtailed, it will be clear that this decision was made in the best interests of both parties when in the future, by the generosity of the Best Prince, their ownership is found to be sure and free from litigation."³⁸ The empire, as led by a strong and just emperor, meant

peace and prosperity; internal fighting was no longer either profitable or possible. In the same dialogue, Plutarch's friend Theon rejoices: "There is profound peace and tranquility, war has ceased, and there are no migrations, civil wars, and tyrannies, nor other Greek ills and troubles requiring powerful and complex medicines" (*De Pyth. or.* 408C).

Plutarch continued as priest of Apollo into the reign of Hadrian. His last known action, taken as *epimelete*, or director, of the Delphic Amphictyony, was to supervise the erection of a statue to that emperor.³⁹ Hadrian favored Delphi in various ways, but chose to make Athens, not Delphi, the center of his new Panhellenion. A final note: despite imperial concern for Delphi over the years, Plutarch in his writings never directly mentions Roman aid to the sanctuary, but fiercely insists on its Hellenic associations. Furthermore, he never speaks of Romans of his day consulting the god, a silence that may reflect his discretion, or the fact that Romans considered Delphi more a touristic site than a locus of contact with the divine.⁴⁰

6. Plutarch's View of Rome in the *Parallel Lives*

Plutarch composed the *Parallel Lives* in the period of prosperity and good will associated with the reign of Trajan. Plutarch's earlier biographical series had focused on the men who exercised imperial power for better or worse. His new project looked deeper into the past, and while apparently undefined at first, had from the beginning a much broader scope: to compare the two cultures, Greek and Roman, through leading figures of their history. The very act of pairing Epaminondas and Scipio, Philopoemen and Flamininus, Cimon and Lucullus, to name some of the earlier lives, asserted a bond of similar challenges and similar virtues throughout their respective histories. The emphasis was on moral virtue in political contexts where leaders worked for the good and even the survival of their cities. The Roman heroes usually act upon a larger stage, but their strengths and weaknesses are similar to those of their Greek counterparts. The striking difference is temporal: the Romans are most often out of phase with the Greeks by centuries, so that Pericles is put with Fabius Maximus, Agesilaus with Pompey, Alexander with Caesar, and Philopoemen, "the last of the Greeks," with Flamininus, whose conquest of Greece was only one step in Rome's expansion.⁴¹ In the comparative epilogues which conclude most pairs, Plutarch is careful to distribute praise and blame equitably, so that neither nation can claim superior virtue. The fundamental moral outlook is Greek, or rather Platonic and Aristotelian: an insistence on training oneself to control one's passion through reason and a vision of one's highest goals. For Plutarch, this perspective was neither Greek nor Roman, but a truth of human nature. A chief object of education, *paideia*, was to introduce a person to the qualities needed for both living and leading: the virtues of justice, temperance, prudence, and courage, and the subsidiary qualities of self-restraint, humanity, and reasonableness.⁴² The *Parallel Lives* presume a reader who shares this moral perspective.⁴³

Such *paideia* is desirable for all, but it arose in a Greek context and was identified with Greek culture. In the *Lives*, Plutarch frequently remarks the deleterious effects of the absence of *paideia* in Romans, most notably Coriolanus and Marius, while commenting on the special value of Greek influence.⁴⁴ Cato Censor's fear that Greek influence would be fatal to Rome was the opposite of the truth: "Time shows that he

was wrong; for Rome's greatest achievements came at the time when it was most welcoming to Greek studies and Greek culture" (*Cat. Mai.* 23.3). But training in virtue could take various forms, including Lycurgus' Spartan law code (*Lyc.* 31), Numa's softening of the Roman martial spirit (*Num.* 8), or Aemilius Paullus' insistence on proper training and discipline both as augur and as general (*Aem.* 3). Because of its late adoption, Plutarch often calls attention to the presence or absence of Greek culture in considering Roman character. The city's militaristic bent, seen both in its readiness to fight and its success, was already apparent in Romulus' day, he notes, and Numa's peaceable reign, free of war and civil strife, was only a brief interruption in a history of continuous warfare. However, it was an idyllic moment and the biographer questions whether it might not have been better if Rome had continued on that path, forsaking war (*Num.* 20; 26 (4). 10–14). Plutarch may have hoped that the peace of his own day would revive Numa's legacy, free of the violence of the civil wars he had seen in his youth. The hope that by assuming the task of moral and historical educator he might hasten this goal would have been a sufficient reason in itself for him to compose the *Lives*.

The *Parallel Lives* encompass Greek and Roman history, as seen from the perspective of Plutarch's own day, when Greece had been subsumed into the empire. Greece had had great moments in defending itself against Persia, in the glorious days of Athenian democracy, and the grand march of Alexander across Persia. But Greece had consumed itself in inter-city wars and reckless ambition. The Romans had not only beaten off their enemies but conquered them, and somehow they had survived intense internal struggles to emerge as rulers of the Mediterranean world and, surprisingly, to complete Greece's work. A few examples will illustrate how the comparison of heroes brings this to light. Solon established the laws of the Athenian democracy with fairness and moderation, but was unable to prevent Peisistratus' tyranny. His counterpart Publicola did away with the Tarquin tyranny and founded the Republic, demonstrating that "he had virtue and purpose equal to Solon, combined with the good fortune and power that could make his virtue effective" (*Comp. Sol.-Publ.* 3.5). Pericles built the monuments which remained a lasting ornament to Athens, more splendid than anything the Romans erected until the age of Augustus (*Per.* 13; *Comp. Per.-Fab.* 3.7), but the Athenians lost the war he had urged, whereas Fabius defended Rome until it could take the offensive and defeat Hannibal. As Swain notes, although Plutarch suggests many similarities in the history of Rome and Athens, there is also a notable contrast, for Athens quickly lost its empire.⁴⁵ Lysander "perhaps hurt Sparta more by winning it money [i.e. the booty of the Athenian empire] than Sulla hurt Rome by looting it" (*Comp. Lys.-Sull.* 3.7). In fact, Lysander's victory over Athens led to Sparta's decline, but Sulla's victories in Greece as a loyal exile ensured Rome's presence in the East and guaranteed that Greece would remain Roman.⁴⁶ Rome, despite all its leaders' failings, continued to extend its domination. The very permanence of its preeminence was a testimony of divine favor.

When it comes to Rome's actions in Greece, Plutarch's opinion is surprisingly favorable. He admires both Philopoemen's brave struggle to preserve Greek independence and Flamininus' moderation in using his victory (*Phil.* 1.6, 11.3–4). The Roman is presented as a just liberator and benefactor, even though of a different race (*allophylos*, *Flam.* 2.5, cf. 11.4, 12.6). Plutarch's evaluation of the moment is significant: Greece had seen great commanders, but except for the victories against the Persians, all their

battles had been fought to enslave other Greeks, and every trophy was a shame to them. Now this foreign people, only distantly related, had rescued and freed her (*Flam.* 11.3–7).

If the quarrelsome spirit of the Greeks weakened them, divine providence also was moving behind the scenes.⁴⁷ Before the battle of Chaeronea the oracle at Delphi issued warnings of dire events to come. In this case the god expressed what Plutarch considered inevitable: “It seems that some divine fortune or revolution of events (*tyché ... daimonios ē periphora pragmatōn*) which was bringing to a close the freedom of Greece ... was revealing the future by many signs” (*Dem.* 19.1).⁴⁸ A god was also operating behind Flamininus’ victory: “Rome’s strength, with superhuman help (*meta tou daimonos*), advanced powerfully against all opposition; the conclusion was near to which the revolution of fortune necessarily was taking it” (*Phil.* 17.2, cf. *Flam.* 12.10). Often, Delphi as a sanctuary and a cultural center appeared as a stage for historic shifts of power. Flamininus, in his victory dedication at Delphi, offered to the god the freedom he had won for the Greeks (*Flam.* 12.11). When Aemilius Paullus defeated Perseus in 168, he appropriated the equestrian statue the king had been preparing as a dedication at Delphi and made it his own: a clear signal that Rome had replaced Macedon in Greece. But divine providence did not necessarily protect Greece from the harshness of the Roman presence. When Sulla confiscated the silver and gold offerings at Delphi to pay for his war against Mithridates, the Delphians protested, claiming that the god had sounded his lyre in anger within the temple. Sulla interpreted the sign differently: an indication of pleasure, not annoyance. He took the loot and defeated Mithridates’ general. Plutarch’s world had been determined by that victory. He intimates here that perhaps the god indeed favored Sulla’s despoiling of his temple to repulse Mithridates, as he seems later to have favored the victory in Italy that allowed Sulla to become dictator (*Sull.* 12.6–9, 29.11–13).

The early declamation on the *Fortune of the Romans* bears witness to the fact that Plutarch’s view of the role of the divine in Roman history was already taking shape when he was a young man. With exuberance and considerable rhetorical skill he unfolds an analogy between the slow coalescence of chaotic atoms into a permanent and orderly whole and the gradual growth of Rome until “at last the world found stability and security, when the controlling power entered into a single, unwavering cycle and world order of peace” (*De fort. Rom.* 317C). The speech glorifies Rome for its good fortune (*tyché*) and courage in war (*aretē*) and offers a stunning vision of the current prosperity of Rome, avoiding any mention of difficulties or civil war under the principate (325D–E). Its notion of a new, stable order is at variance not only with the *Caesars’* description of governmental collapse in 69 CE, but also the *Parallel Lives’* more nuanced presentation of political struggles throughout Rome’s history.⁴⁹

Plutarch believed in divine concern for and beneficence toward mankind. So it was natural for him to see major historical changes as taking place under divine guidance and bringing benefits to society, without denying that mortals acted according to their own motivation and ability as well. The last major change before Plutarch’s day was the establishment of monarchy at Rome.⁵⁰ Providential direction lay behind the actions and events which led to that outcome, as Plutarch indicates in reporting Pompey’s complaint to Cratippus of his treatment by Providence. Although the philosopher avoided challenging the fallen dynast, the biographer does not. Cratippus, he remarks, might have observed

that “monarchy was now needed for affairs, because of bad government (*kakopoliteia*)” and asked in turn, “Would you have used fortune better than Caesar, if you had won? These affairs of the gods must be left as they are” (*Pomp.* 75.4–5). Providence was moving to replace the broken senatorial regime with monarchy, and Caesar was the mildest doctor for the transition (cf. *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 1.1; *Comp. Dion-Brut.* 2.2). The divine power likewise removed Brutus at Philippi, since “affairs ... required monarchy” (*Brut.* 47.7).

This epoch-making transformation from republic to monarchy became a special focus of the later lives of the series. The period 70–30 BCE is treated in *Caesar*, *Pompey*, *Crassus*, *Lucullus*, *Cato*, *Cicero*, *Brutus*, and *Antony*.⁵¹ Plutarch was breaking new and potentially dangerous ground in treating this period, especially with the lives of Caesar’s opponents, Cato and Brutus.⁵² Only a few years before, Domitian had executed Rusticus for praising Thrasea Pactus, who had written a life of Cato. The greater length of this group of lives reflects the importance Plutarch attached to them. They reveal major flaws in the protagonists alongside their great achievements. Even Caesar is presented as driven by unquenchable and ultimately fruitless ambition. Plutarch appears to be responding to his Roman readers’ desire to hold in their hands not just treatments of legendary republican heroes, but probing studies that dealt directly with the realities of political life: pride, self-interest, and naked power. Monarchy was necessary in Plutarch’s mind to avoid the excesses of competition that had led to the breakdown of the first century, but he knew only too well from his biographies of the emperors and his observation of the wars of 69 CE that monarchy did not guarantee peace and good government. Outbreaks of violence were always possible. Plutarch wrote of Sulla’s arbitrary cruelty, “we must pray to avoid such times and hope for better” (*Prae. ger. reip.* 816A). That hope depended upon the good character of the emperor and the leading men of the empire. By holding up his biographical mirror to his Roman audience, revealing all the strengths and faults of men like Caesar, Cato, Pompey, and Antony, he hoped to make them more aware of their own character and its workings. Certainly he hoped that his work might help avoid the kinds of civil strife that destroyed the republic.

7. Living Under Roman Rule

Concord, the productive cooperation of the leading citizens for the good of the whole state, was essential for individual cities no less than for the empire. In a significant treatise on civic politics addressed to an ambitious young aristocrat in Smyrna, Plutarch’s preoccupation is precisely harmony and avoidance of conflict among the civic leaders. Civic unrest, such as had recently occurred at Smyrna, could have only one result, the direct interference of the Roman authorities.⁵³ The Greek cities, he writes, already have great blessings: peace and liberty (“as much as our rulers allow, and perhaps more would not be better”): they should pray for concord (*Prae. ger. reip.* 824C). Politicians should recall that they govern “a city subordinate to proconsuls and procurators of Caesar” (813E) and that Roman power would enforce order if they stirred up disturbances in their cities. Calls to imitate the victories at Marathon or Plataea were untimely and dangerous in the present context and should be left to sophistic display oratory. Rather Greek politicians should make friends in the Roman

power structure. “The Romans themselves are quite eager to help their friends in political matters,” Plutarch notes. One should “pluck the fruit of friendship with leaders,” as Polybius had done with Scipio, and Areius with Augustus (814C). Furthermore, politicians should avoid servile consultation of the Romans on small matters: this is slavery (814E). Political leaders could best keep their independence by promoting internal harmony in their cities.⁵⁴

The two-element political structure, elite and demos, that Plutarch sees in contemporary Greek cities he employs as well in his biographies, both Greek and Roman. This approach is consistent with his Platonic-Aristotelian concept of human nature, which distinguishes the rational element from the irrational, and insists that the rational should direct and limit the irrational. He therefore presumes that the “aristocratic” segment of the state should lead and keep under control the “popular” portion. From this viewpoint, concord and harmony under sagacious leadership will mark the peaceful state, internal conflict and war the troubled one.⁵⁵ In the contemporary Roman Empire, political concord was particularly desirable after the year of the four emperors and the abuses of Domitian’s reign. Plutarch admired Camillus’ wise admittance of plebeians to the consulship as a solution to a domestic crisis, and notes that his vow to establish a temple to Concord preceded his decision. The Gracchi, though rightly opposing senatorial rigidity, were wrong to push too hard; on the other hand Opimius’ construction of a temple of Concord after slaughtering the Gracchan faction was hypocritical (*Cam.* 42.4, 6; *Gracch.* 38 (17) 8–9).

However, Roman republican politics is often distorted by this elite–populace schema, which repeatedly pits the few against the many, the senate against the people: not only does it omit the equestrian class as a major factor, but it tends to ignore how both the popular and the aristocratic element changed over time, as well as the internal divisions among those groups. In the *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch often classes reformers attempting to change political structures as demagogues, suppresses major transformations such as the Marian army reforms or Sulla’s innovations, and marginalizes or omits other complicating factors. Soldiers he treats as an irrational element similar to the urban populace.⁵⁶ Partially this results from his applying Greek values to Roman concepts, enfolding Rome into the Greek cultural tradition.⁵⁷ But there is also a conscious purpose. By making temporal and institutional distinctions less clear, he introduces a philosophically based timelessness into his analysis, as a result of which his biographies focus not on the peculiarities of Greek and Roman practice, but on the communalities. This perspective permits and encourages the reader to view moral character in politics comparatively, not only between Greek and Roman protagonists, but also between the reader and the heroes portrayed. As Pelling points out, Plutarch often seems to avoid contemporary issues, “keeping his distance from the specific and preferring the bigger and more timeless themes.”⁵⁸ He wished his readers to see in his biographies beyond the specific problems faced by the protagonist to the larger categories – demagoguery and tyranny, political envy and ambition, etc. – and the virtues his heroes demonstrated or lacked in dealing with them. His more abstract focus permitted the accounts of events and decisions in the biographies to become accessible to the Romans and Greeks of his own day, who could apply the lessons learned in their own lives. In this way, the study of Roman history became an exercise in moral philosophy.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. Swain (1996), Whitmarsh (2001) and (2005), Borg (2004), Woolf (1994), Veyne (1999), and Desideri (1991) and (1998).
- 2 Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 678 CD. Cf. Stadter (2004) 22.
- 3 Plutarch never mentions his Roman citizenship, which we know only through the inscription on a statue base for Hadrian by Plutarch as priest of Apollo and *epimelete* of the Delphic Amphictyony, *SIG*³ 829A.
- 4 At some point before receiving the *ornamenta consularia* from Trajan, he certainly was an equestrian. If his personal wealth was insufficient, Florus or another benefactor could have helped with a gift.
- 5 Plut. *Otho* 14.2, 18.2. Cf. Jones (1971) 21–22. Florus was consul *c.* 75 CE.
- 6 On Mestrius Florus, cf. Jones (1971) 48–49; Puech (1992) 4860.
- 7 See Stadter (2004) 23–25; for Plutarch's travels to Rome, see Jones (1971) 20–25.
- 8 Plin. *Ep.* 1.10, cf. also *Ep.* 3.11, on his relation to the philosopher Artemidorus. Both letters give a good indication of how Florus might have befriended Plutarch.
- 9 Julius Secundus is cited for information at *Otho* 9.3: cf. Jones (1971) 50, 75; Puech (1992) 4855.
- 10 Stadter (2004) 23–24.
- 11 On Plutarch's knowledge of Latin, see Stadter (2010) and notes 14 and 15 below.
- 12 The similarities and discrepancies are set out by Hardy (1890) xi–xxiii, xxix–xliii. See also the full study in Fabia (1898; rpt. Rome, 1967) and Damon (2003) 24–30, 291–302, 305–306. No sure candidate for a common source has been identified.
- 13 On the interpretation of *Dem.* 2 cf. Mossman (1999) and Zadorojnyi (2006).
- 14 Cf. Sickinger (1883) 64–86; Rose (1924) 14–18; Glucker (1978) 386–390; De Rosalia (1991); Strobach (1997) 33–39.
- 15 Erbse (1979) 491 n. 39.
- 16 Cf. Georgiadou and Schettino in this volume, on the sources of the *Lives*.
- 17 The work is not finished and there is no hard evidence for date. Jones (1971) 14 and others consider it an early rhetorical exercise from the 60s CE, but the knowledge of Roman history it demonstrates seems more appropriate later. If indeed it is that early, it shows that Plutarch's commitment to acquiring an understanding of Rome began even earlier than argued here.
- 18 Cf. Theander (1959).
- 19 Cf. Boulogne (1992), (1994) 75–146, (2002); Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen (1999).
- 20 Jones (1971) 21–25; Flacelière (1987) xxxi–xxxii.
- 21 Flacelière (1954) no. 120; *SIG*³ 821.
- 22 *Quaest. conv.* 632A.
- 23 *Quaest. conv.* 612E, 734E, 666D.
- 24 Cf. Jones (1971) 48–64; Puech (1992) 4883; Stadter (2000) 495–496.
- 25 Cf. Swain (1996) 144–145.
- 26 For friends not listed here, see Ziegler (1951) 665–696; Jones (1971) 39–64; and Puech (1992).
- 27 See in general Jones (1971) 72–80; Bowersock (1998); Stadter (2005). Literary analysis in Ash (1997); Keitel (1995). The date is disputed, and many put the series later: see Stadter (2005) 428–432, with references.
- 28 This notion, common in Hellenistic thinking, is explained in his *To an Uneducated Ruler* (*Ad princ. inerud.*) and *Philosophers and Rulers* (*Max. cum princ.*). Cf. Roskam (2009) 132–138 and Chapter 10 in this volume. Cf. also *Num.* 3.7–8, 20.7–12, and *Lyc.* 31.1–3.
- 29 Freedom for Greece: Plut. *Flam.* 12.13; cf. Jones (1971) 17. Reincarnation as a frog: *De sera* 567F; cf. Brenk (1987).
- 30 *Sol.* 31.2–3. Cf. Stadter (2002b) 232–236.

- 31 Cf. Flacelière (1976) 100–103; Beck (2002).
- 32 Plut. *Ap. Reg.* 172D. For the mirror image, cf. *Aem.* 1.1 with Frazier (2011); Zadorojnyi (2010); Stadter (2003/2004).
- 33 Cf. Stadter (2002a) 6–8, 11–13 and (2002b) on Trajanic ideology.
- 34 The information comes only from the *Suda*, a Byzantine encyclopedia, but seems credible. Cf. Jones (1971) 29; Flacelière (1987), L–LI; Zecchini (2002) 196–197. The reliability of the notice is rejected by Swain (1991) 318 and (1996) 171–172. The rhetorician and educator Quintilian received this honor from Domitian.
- 35 Jones (1971) 34; Swain (1991) 318; Zecchini (2002) 197.
- 36 For Plutarch's relation to Delphi, cf. Flacelière (1987) XLVI–L; Stadter (2004).
- 37 Cf. Jacquemin (1991).
- 38 Rousset (2002) no. 11, lines 12–13. Cf. Stadter (2004) 30.
- 39 *SIG*³ 829A, cf. Jones (1971) 34; Swain (1991). The philhellene Hadrian had visited Boeotia and been archon at Athens before becoming emperor: Plutarch may have met him on either occasion, or others (cf. Birley (1997)).
- 40 Cf. Stadter (2005), especially pp. 212–213.
- 41 Cf. Pelling (2010).
- 42 That is, *dikaïosunê*, *sôphrosynê*, *phronesis*, *andreia*, and *praotês*, *philanthrôpia*, and *epieikeia*. Cf. Frazier (1996). Plutarch's emphasis on moral virtue for political leadership distinguishes this function for *paideia* from the literary and rhetorical emphasis of Second Sophistic writers.
- 43 Cf. Stadter (1988); Pelling (2002a) 267–282.
- 44 *Cor.* 1.3–6, 15.4–5; *Mar.* 1.3–4, 45.10–46.5. Greek influence: e.g. *Marc.* 21.4, 7; *Luc.* 1.4–8, 42.1–4. Cf. Swain (1990).
- 45 Swain (1996) 154.
- 46 Cf. Candau Morón (2000).
- 47 On Plutarch's view of Rome's providential success and the necessary movement toward monarchy, note *De fort. Rom.* 316E–317C, discussed below, and see Swain (1989a) and Stadter (2005) 205–210.
- 48 Cf. also *Phoc.* 1–3.
- 49 On this work, the date of which is disputed, see Swain (1989b); Frazier (1990); Forni (1989); Swain (1996) 151–161. On *De fort. Rom.* 317BC, see Dillon (1997). Beck (2003) examines the rhetorical treatment of the historical anecdotes in this work that are also found in the *Lives*.
- 50 Cf. *Ant.* 56.6, “It was necessary that everything come around to Caesar (Octavianus),” with Brenk (1977) 164–165; Pelling (1988) 256–257.
- 51 Six of these (excluding *Cicero* and *Lucullus*) most probably were written at one time, late in the series: see Pelling (1979). If one were to start from the Gracchan revolution, *Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus*, *Marius*, *Sulla*, and *Sertorius* would also be included.
- 52 Cf. Geiger (2002) 97–98.
- 53 Plutarch mentions one politician, Pardalas, who had recently been executed by the Romans (*Prae. ger. reip.* 813F, cf. 825D).
- 54 Cf. Trapp (2004) and Swain (1996) 161–187. The latter, however, exaggerates Plutarch's aversion to involvement in Roman politics: contrast Stadter (2002c) 124–126. Plutarch here and elsewhere calls the Romans *hegemones*, that is, “leaders” rather than “rulers,” continuing the Greek tradition, in which the Spartans or Athenians, and later the Macedonians, could be called “leaders” of their respective alliances/empires.
- 55 See in general Duff (1999) 72–82, 89–94; Jones (1971) 111–119 and (1978) 83–94; and Chapter 10 in this volume.
- 56 Cf. Pelling (1986); de Blois (1992).
- 57 Duff (1999) 302–303.
- 58 Pelling (2002) 222.

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CHAPTER 2

Plutarch and the Second Sophistic

Thomas A. Schmitz

During the last twenty years, as Imperial Greek literature has received much more scholarly attention than it had in a long time before, the Second Sophistic has seen an almost miraculous transformation: it is no longer considered the epitome of shallowness and the telltale symptom of intellectual decadence, but the vibrant expression of a self-confident elite on the rise. In what can be described as an ironic reenactment of history, the somewhat noisy and flashy performers of the Second Sophistic again sidelined their less ostentatious contemporaries. Plutarch is a good example of this trend: he has certainly not suffered from neglect during the last decades (in fact, he can be said to be one of the very few Imperial authors that have always been popular with both specialized scholars and general readers), but compared to the attention scholars have paid to the second and third centuries CE, his public image has been more subdued and quiet.

Plutarch's world is not the world of the Second Sophistic, in several ways: on the one hand, Plutarch is one or two generations older than the most prominent sophists; as D.A. Russell ((2001) 2) admirably puts it, "he witnessed a revival in his own country, not yet the full-blown ostentation of the Greek world under the Antonines, but a promise and a sense of things stirring." Moreover, he prefers the quiet and withdrawn life of the backwater of the Roman Empire to the flamboyant and wealthy cities of Asia Minor. Above all, however, Plutarch defined himself as a philosopher, and as we will see, the Second Sophistic played an important role in his self-fashioning. Like all members of the educated elite, he received rhetorical training at school. He wrote a few declamatory pieces; they are rather insignificant in themselves and may have survived because of their author's renown, not because of their literary value. Beck ((2003) esp. 169–171, 188) is rightly cautious about their date: Plutarch himself considered rhetoric more suitable for younger people (e.g. *The Intelligence of Animals* 959B–C), and since these declamations display a more rhetorically embellished style than most of his other work, and the material

they present is sometimes paralleled in his *Lives*, many scholars have assumed that they must necessarily have been written in his youth and that he later returned to the anecdotes and examples he had collected in his school of rhetoric and reused them for his “serious” writings. This may or may not be the case: the difference in style is dictated by a difference in genre (see Russell (2001) 31–34), and the reuse of the same material might as well be interpreted as evidence that these works were composed in the same period. The important aspect, however, is that these writings are marginal in the Plutarchan corpus: they are clearly not what he was most interested in or most proud of; rather, they are by-products of his fertile mind.

Nevertheless, these declamations show that Plutarch is closer to the world of the Second Sophistic than one would suspect at first blush. Before we can attempt to determine the relationship between Plutarch and the Second Sophistic, we have to give at least a working definition of what this Second Sophistic was. Although many scholarly works have been published on this literary movement, especially during the last twenty years,¹ it is still difficult to find a clear definition that will be accepted by all scholars.

Many documents from the second and third centuries CE depict the most obvious phenomena of the Second Sophistic. Sophists in the Imperial era were orators. Although they might occasionally use their rhetorical skills in law courts or on public missions (such as embassies), their fame rested primarily on their declamations (Russell (1983)). In these showpieces, sophists presented imaginary lawsuits or impersonated great figures of the classical Greek past such as Themistocles, Pericles, or Demosthenes. Typical themes for such declamations included “the fathers of two soldiers who have died in the battle of Marathon argue about the prize awarded to the best fighter” or “Demosthenes laments the Athenians after the battle of Chaeronea” (the former is the topic of a pair of declamations by the famous sophist Polemo of Laodicea which has been transmitted; the latter is mentioned in Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.22; 522). These speeches dazzled their audiences by their clever rhetorical tricks, their forceful imagery, their intoxicating rhythms – but above all, sophists were virtuosos of language: they had to imitate as closely as possible the style, the grammar, and the vocabulary of classical Attic, a form of Greek which dated back to the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, half a millennium before the sophists’ own period. Moreover, sophists took pride in improvising their declamations: they would let their audience suggest topics to them, and then would present their speeches extemporaneously in this classical idiom, which must have felt like a foreign language to most members of their public.

Such fictitious declamations on imaginary juridical or historical topics had their origins in the schools of rhetoric. This is clearly shown by the Greek term for such speeches: they were called *meletē*, “exercise” (see Civiletti (2002)). We are not quite sure at what point in time such speeches left the classroom and came to be regarded as a form of entertainment, but we can see that in the second century CE, performers of such declamations were admired and celebrated like today’s rock singers or movie stars. They traveled through the major cities in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, performed before enthralled audiences, and felt “superior to entire cities, not subservient to emperors, and equal to the gods,” as Philostratus famously described Polemo of Laodicea, one of the most successful sophists (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.25; 535). Most sophists did not have to rely on their rhetorical fame alone for such arrogance: they came from privileged and wealthy families, most of them held Roman citizenship, and some reached the highest

offices in the empire. The most impressive example is Herodes Atticus (c. 101–177 CE; on him, see Ameling (1983); Rife (2008)): he was an Athenian, one of the richest men of his time, he held the consulship in 143 CE, and he was the most celebrated of all the sophists – Warren Buffett, Barack Obama, and George Clooney rolled into one person, as it were. Sophistic oratory was one of the many ways in which the wealthy and educated elite in the Roman Empire displayed and performed their superior social status in public.

Our most important witness for this phenomenon is the *Lives of the Sophists* by Philostratus, who was active in the first half of the third century CE (on Philostratus, see Bowie and Elsner (2009)). Several members of his family (who, confusingly, all shared the name Philostratus) were successful sophists, and Philostratus himself was personally acquainted with some of the greatest stars in the business. He coined the term “Second Sophistic,” but it is not easy to see what exactly he assumed it to be: this sophistic, he explains, “should not be called ‘new,’ for it is old, but rather ‘second’” (*Lives of the Sophists* 1, 481). His history of the movement is anecdotal, highly entertaining, yet somewhat elusive.² Although Philostratus claims that the Second Sophistic was founded by the Athenian orator Aeschines in the fourth century BCE, his account really begins with a number of sophists from the first century CE; these orators (such as Nicetes of Smyrna, Isaeus, and Dionysius of Miletus) were Plutarch’s contemporaries. The bulk of Philostratus’ text, however, is concerned with declaimers who lived in the second and third centuries. This is one of the problems we face when we talk about the Second Sophistic: it is impossible to pinpoint its origin. Undoubtedly, it was the (relative) peace and quiet of the early principate which brought prosperity to the Eastern Empire and bolstered the self-confidence of the local elites. These favorable external conditions were the prerequisites for sophists’ prominence and for their economic success. But the emergence of sophists, the transformation from teachers of rhetoric into highly acclaimed public declaimers, must have been a gradual process. While we have a relatively clear picture of sophistic activity in the second century CE, our knowledge for Plutarch’s time is much less secure.

Another problem is the scope of the Second Sophistic. Philostratus’ account provides us with vivid details about the lives of the real superstars of sophistic oratory. But our ancient sources also mention names of sophists who are otherwise unknown to us; this is especially true of the epigraphic record (on which see Puech (2002)): numerous honorary and funerary inscriptions mention “sophists” and “rhetors” and extol the “education” (*paideia*) or “rhetorical skill” (*logoi*) of the recipients of these inscriptions. What made these men aspire to the title “sophist”? Were they declaimers themselves, albeit of local fame in their own towns and provinces only? Or was this just a customary way of marking their social status, and should “sophist” just be assumed to be an honorary attribute which means little more than “gentleman” (see Bowersock (1969) 13–14)?

We must keep these questions in mind if we now turn to Plutarch. In order to understand how he saw and described the emergence of sophists and of sophistic oratory, we will begin by analyzing the way in which he uses terms from the semantic field relating to sophists and sophistic declamations.

First, we find that Plutarch uses the term “sophist” a number of times as a historical attribute. In *The E at Delphi*, he refers to the Seven Sages (or rather, in this case, to the Five Sages, for he has his brother Lamprias argue that only five of them really were sages) as “wise men, or, as some called them, sophists” (385D–E). Plutarch is here, as it were,

quoting a meaning of the word “sophist” which he found in classical writers, but which had become obsolete by his time: originally, the term was neither laudatory nor derogatory; it denoted somebody who laid claim to professional skill in a defined field (see Guthrie (1971) 27–34; Kerferd (1981) 24–41). These fields could be as diverse as poetry or music or prophecy. Plutarch himself gives a hint that he is merely quoting an older use of the term when he points out explicitly that Herodotus called the Seven Sages “sophists” (*On the Malice of Herodotus* 857F; Herodotus uses the term at 1.29.1; at 4.95.2, Pythagoras is called “sophist”): obviously, this name has different connotations for his readers and himself; therefore, this use of the term seems remarkable to him.

The oldest use of the word sophist, then, was fairly neutral in the sense of “specialist” or “wise man”; this neutral use was striking to Plutarch and to his audience. However, since Plutarch is a philosopher in the Platonic tradition, the term “sophist” is often more specific in his work when it refers to the great sophists of the fifth century BCE, intellectuals and orators such as Gorgias, Hippias, or Protagoras, who were made immortal by Plato’s dialogues. In the first of his *Platonic Questions*, for instance, Plutarch gives a lengthy explanation why Socrates had to devote his life to examining and refuting people (999E):

For as if by chance, a crop of sophists turned up at that time in Greece. And young men paid them handsome amounts of money and in return were filled with conceit and arrogance and were constantly looking for idle discussions and futile polemics and ambitious rivalries, yet accomplished nothing fair and useful.

In passages such as this one, Plutarch quotes not only the term itself from Plato, but also the connotations it carries: a sophist is a bit too clever. He can be a charlatan, an impostor, or he can be an unscrupulous trickster. The things he teaches are not quite serious subjects, and his students will not learn anything really useful, but rather derive shallow arrogance from his teachings.

Plutarch repeats these and similar prejudices against sophists: they are sycophants, greedy, and smart alecks (e.g., *How To Tell a Flatterer* 65C; *Stoic Self-Contradictions* 1047F; *On Listening to Lectures* 46E). Of course, these negative connotations of the word “sophist” reflect the eternal prejudices against intellectuals (or at least some brands of intellectuals) that can be found in all societies at all times. But they are also derived from a certain sociological background, an outlook on human behavior which Plutarch and Plato shared across so many centuries. This is especially conspicuous when we look at Plutarch’s somewhat critical remarks about the “handsome amounts of money” that young men were willing to pay to sophists. Men in Plutarch’s and Plato’s social position had no need to make money by teaching, so they regarded this as a sign of commercialism and of a certain dishonesty. For people from the upper echelons of society, selling their knowledge to whoever was willing to pay for it and teaching students to argue and use their own reason was the equivalent of stirring trouble: they did not want their authority or the state of society questioned because they profited from the status quo.

Plutarch both shared Plato’s social outlook and inherited Plato’s judgment because he was an Academic philosopher (see Dillon in this volume). Plato was not the only author of such prejudices against sophists, but his dialogues were by far the most vigorous and influential depiction of them as dangerous and pretentious intellectuals. It is not

surprising, then, that Plutarch uses the word “sophistic” a number of times to denote deceptive, ruthless, or amoral behavior: Sertorius is said to be “a clever sophist in maneuvers which required speed, deceit, and falsehood” (*Sertorius* 10.4; cf. the juxtaposition “deceitful and sophistic” (*apatēla kai sophistika*) at *Alexander* 62.7). In a number of Spartan anecdotes, anonymous “sophists” are presented as foils for their interlocutors; the Spartans are depicted as reserved and taciturn, the sophists are all talk and no action:

When a sophist said, “Speech is the strongest of all things,” Agis retorted: “So you are quite worthless when you are silent!” (*Sayings of Spartans* 215E)

These examples show that “sophist” often is a loaded word in Plutarch’s writings. It is not an innocent term, but it carries traces of prior usage, be it in a surprisingly positive (such as Herodotus’ use to denote philosophers) or in a derogatory way (such as Plato’s critique of sophists).

So far, we have only seen the sophist as a stock type or as a historical figure. We now turn to Plutarch’s own period: of course, he was aware that some of his contemporaries called themselves “sophists.” But the fact that he is so explicit in emphasizing that somebody was “a sophist of our time” (*On Envy and Hate* 538C) is telling: for him (and for his readers, one may assume), “sophist” had not yet become a household word to denote contemporary orators – or rather, we can see that Plutarch reminds his readers that the term is not innocent, that a sophist “in our time” is something unusual.

Nevertheless, his writings clearly show that he knew many sophists and their trade. Plutarch was familiar with the terminology surrounding sophistic declamations: he uses the technical terms *dialexis* and *meletē* when he speaks about the declamations of modern-day sophists (e.g., *On Listening to Lectures* 41D; *Advice about Keeping Well* 131A; *Philosophers and Men in Power* 778B), and especially his vivid descriptions in *On Listening to Lectures* demonstrate that he must have attended such recitations himself. We have seen that he composed declamations himself; we can only speculate whether he attended such performances during his days as a student of rhetoric only or whether he listened to declaimers as a grown-up as well. Apparently, Plutarch also had inside knowledge about the development of the sophistic movement. We have seen the curious genealogy of sophistic oratory that Philostratus constructs: he lets the Second Sophistic start with Aeschines, in the fourth century BCE (see Côté (2005)). The chronology of his account is somewhat muddled (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.18; 509)³:

[After his defeat in the trial against Demosthenes, Aeschines] left Athens secretly, not because he had been ordered to go into exile, but because he wanted to avoid the disgrace [...]. Now the motivation of his journey had been to go to Alexander, whom he thought would shortly arrive in Babylon and Susa. But when he disembarked in Ephesus and heard that Alexander had died and affairs in Asia were greatly disturbed, he headed for Rhodes. This island is well suited for intellectual pursuits, and he made Rhodes a thinkery of sophists and lived there, sacrificing to peace and the Muses and mixing Attic customs into the Dorians.

Philostratus’ bizarre genealogy apparently was common knowledge in the second and third centuries; it is shared, e.g., by the second-century rhetorician Hermogenes (*De id. verb.* 2.11). Plutarch’s *Demosthenes* shows that he was already familiar with the story: “Aeschines left the city immediately and spent the rest of his life in Rhodes and Ionia as

a sophist" (*Demosthenes* 24.3: *sophisteuōn katebiōse*). This proves that Philostratus did not invent the story of Aeschines the "sophist," which was known more than a century before he wrote his *Lives of the Sophists*. For Plutarch, on the other hand, this is just an incidental remark; hence, he is unlikely to be the originator of this theory. We must conclude, then, that Plutarch and the later accounts go back to a common source (which we do not know)⁴; but what is more important for our current purpose: Plutarch had interest in and specialist knowledge about the way in which contemporary sophists constructed a classical pedigree for their profession.

How exactly did Plutarch conceive of the term "sophist" when used with respect to contemporary intellectuals? One good way to find out is to look at passages in which he contrasts sophists with other professions. In his essay *On Brotherly Love*, Plutarch subdivides the set "orators" into two groups: those who speak in the lawcourts and those who are sophists (486C *tōn rhētorōn hoi dikologoi tois sophisteuousin*; this is in analogy to other groups, such as physicians, subdivided into surgeons and dieticians, or men serving the state, subdivided into politicians and generals). Sophists, then, are a special kind of *rhētores* who do not speak in court. Confusingly, however, in other passages, Plutarch makes sophists not a subset of *rhētores* but, rather, contrasts these two terms. In his *Advice about Keeping Well*, he tells us that "many *rhētores* and sophists suffer this fate: they get carried away and compete even when it is bad for them, the latter because of glory and ambition, the former because of profit or political rivalries" (131A: *polloi tōn rhētorōn kai tōn sophistōn*). Here, the term *rhētores* appears to denote politicians who pursue a concrete economic or political agenda while sophists are depicted as more independent intellectuals who go after glory. As Bowersock ((1969) 10–15) has shown, it is not easy to determine where exactly ancient documents draw the line between sophists, *rhētores*, and other intellectual types, and this difficulty is reflected in Plutarch's use of the word.

One passage in his *Precepts on Statecraft* is particularly interesting in this context: in it, Plutarch again appears to be making a clear distinction between politicians and sophists. He reminds Menemachus, the addressee of this treatise, that every Greek politician must remember that ultimately, he is under the supervision of the Roman administration. Hence, he should be careful with his use of examples taken from classical Greek history. Use only historical lessons that will incite your citizens to moral and decent behavior, Plutarch urges his young addressee (814C):

If we follow these examples, it is possible to resemble our ancestors. But stories about Marathon and the (battle at the) Eurymedon and Plataea and other examples which make the populace swell with pride and become conceited and vain, we should leave those in the sophists' schools.

Again, this passage with its gibe at "sophists' schools" demonstrates that Plutarch was familiar with contemporary sophistic oratory. Topics such as the battles of the Persian Wars were indeed frequent occurrences in sophistic declamations: Polemo's pair of speeches about Marathon is transmitted, and Philostratus tells us that Polemo's student Ptolemaeus of Naucratis was so fond of the topic that he was nicknamed "Marathon" (*Lives of the Sophists* 2.15; 595). In this passage, Plutarch again distinguishes between the political speeches of responsible politicians on the one hand, and vain declamations on the other hand which will

make their audience arrogant and unruly. When he restricts these speeches to “the schools of the sophists” (*en tais scholais tōn sophistōn*), he depicts the sophists as mere schoolteachers (cf. *Precepts about Statecraft* 813A, where the same connection is made between sophists and schools). This could again at face value be taken as evidence that Plutarch is witness to an early stage of the Second Sophistic when sophistic declamations had not quite left the classroom. However, when we take a closer look at the passage, this interpretation becomes problematic: when Plutarch warns against using such “sophistic” examples in political speeches, he appears to be referring to actual occurrences. Such speeches were obviously appealing to Greek audiences and could be felt (or at least be depicted) as potentially disrupting the peace and quiet of the Roman Empire. If the distinction between political speeches and sophistic school exercises had been as clear-cut as Plutarch wants his readers to believe, his warning against such topics would have been unnecessary. What we see, then, is more an ideological construct than a distinction based on reality: Plutarch uses the sophist as the “other” in order to depict an image of the responsible and orderly statesman.

This ideological aspect is visible even in the one opposition where we would expect a clear-cut difference between sophists and other groups. Plutarch frequently contrasts sophists and philosophers; the opposition “sophistic – philosophic” (which he of course inherited from Plato and the Academic tradition) occurs several times in his work (e.g. *On Moral Virtue* 449A; *On Listening to Lectures* 48D). As we will see later, Plutarch constructs a fairly consistent antithesis between these two terms. But even in this case, the distinction can at times be muddled. Some individuals seem to fit both categories. The “Egyptian” Philostratus is such a case: Philostratus tells us that “he was a philosopher with queen Cleopatra, yet he was called a sophist” (*Lives of the Sophists* 1.5; 486 *Kleopatrain men sumphilosophounta tēi basilidi, sophistēn de prosrhēthenta*). Plutarch also mentions the double affiliation of this man: “Philostratus was one of the men [whom Octavian pardoned in Alexandria]. He was the ablest of the sophists of his time in improvised speaking, yet he inserted himself into the Academy wrongfully. This is why Octavian, who loathed his manner, did [at first] not fulfill his entreaties” (*Antony* 80.3–4; Plutarch then goes on to relate how Philostratus succeeded in obtaining Octavian’s pardon by clever use of a tragic quotation). Again, the reference to “improvised speaking” shows Plutarch’s familiarity with sophistic performances: this was indeed one of the most important signs of being a sophist. Plutarch rejects Philostratus’ self-description as an (Academic) philosopher as “inappropriate,” yet the fact that he has to argue against it and that he calls him a “philosopher” elsewhere demonstrates that categories were less well defined than he would have wished. It was obviously possible for intellectuals to be both sophists and philosophers.

In sum, then, we see that the opposition between sophists and other groups is a function of the ideological framework of the individual text, not an immutable quality of sophists. This ideological aspect becomes particularly visible when we look at what is probably the most persistent characteristic that Plutarch ascribes to sophists: their extreme ambition and competitiveness. We have already seen (above, p. 37) that Plutarch names *philotimia*, ambition, as one of the characteristic traits of sophists. He illustrates this claim with a telling anecdote about an acquaintance of his, an otherwise unknown sophist called Niger (*Advice about Keeping Well* 131A–B)⁵:

When our fellow-citizen Niger was giving sophistic declamations in Galatia, he happened to swallow a fish bone. But as another sophist from abroad appeared and began to declaim, he

was afraid that he might be perceived as giving in, so he performed even though the bone was still stuck in his throat. [...] and the sore from it became inflamed and killed him.

In telling this anecdote, Plutarch emphasizes the fact that Niger's death is caused by his "sophistic" *philotimia*; numerous words referring to sophistic activities occur (*sophisteuōn* "being a sophist," *sophistou* "the sophist," *meletōntos* "declaiming," *emeletēse* "he declaimed"). Sophists get so caught up in their game of competition and one-upmanship that they are unable to stop, even if it means harm to them.

Competition and ambition are the traits that are most prominent in Plutarch's depiction of contemporary sophists, and he is highly critical of these characteristics: he uses the verb *sophistiaō* as a synonym for "quarreling" (*Table Talk* 613C), and he calls nitpicking about points of style "petty and sophistic" (*Nicias* 1.4). We find condemnations of such an attitude in several of Plutarch's writings. The following passage from *On Listening to Lectures* (42D) is a particularly vehement example:

Someone who from the outset does not pay attention to the subject matter but insists that the style be pure Attic and unadorned, resembles the man who refuses to drink an antidote unless the cup is made of Attic ware [...]. This disease produces emptiness of mind and of good sense and much palaver and idle talk in the schools: our young men do not care about the life, the deeds or the public conduct of a man, but are impressed only by his style, his words, and the beauty of expression. Whether the content is useful or useless, essential or empty and superfluous, they do not know, and they do not wish to examine.

This passage contains a number of loaded terms which make it obvious to Plutarch's readers that he is talking about sophists: the exaggerated care for pure Atticist style and vocabulary (*tēn lexin Attikēn axiōn einai*), the reference to schools (*en tais scholais*), and the disregard for the ethical content of speeches (*to apangellomenon eite chrēsimon eit'achrēston*) are all characteristics of the Second Sophistic as Plutarch viewed it. The example of the man who refuses to drink medicine unless the cup be of the finest Attic ware alludes to a passage in Plato's *Gorgias* (456b–c): there, the sophist Gorgias claimed that his rhetorical skills were often able to convince patients to drink medicine when they had refused to do so before. This allusion to one of the most well-known sophists of the Classical Age reinforces the idea that this sophistic attitude is not only useless, but even dangerous because it obscures what is really good for you. Again, we see that the "sophistic" attitude is constructed as an "other," a foil for the system of values which Plutarch wants his readers to adopt: instead of empty pedantry, they will of course pay attention to the philosophical content of a speech (the "uselessness" of sophistic speeches is emphasized several times in *On Listening to Lectures*; cf. 41D; 46E). In a passage of *Advice about Keeping Well*, Plutarch describes his attitude towards "sophistic competition" by using an analogy: physicians advise to use gentle forms of exercise after dinner, not violent and exhausting activities. The same rule, Plutarch explains, should be applied to mental activities (133E):

In the same manner, we will argue that one should not distract the soul after dinner with serious business or cares or sophistic competition (*sophistikois agōsi*) which end in ambitious or aggressive rivalry.

As I have tried to show elsewhere (Schmitz (2012)), Plutarch systematically sets his own manner of discussing and exploring philosophical questions in opposition to a “sophistic” mode of debate, which is characterized by pedantic contention and unlimited personal ambition. These depictions should be read as (rhetorical) strategies for creating a persuasive authorial voice: Plutarch invites his readers to share his perspective, to view the philosophical discussions as they are described in his own dialogues as examples of serious, “useful” endeavors. This argumentative stance is made more appealing with the help of a counter-image: the pedantic sophist who is forever nitpicking about frivolous details of style and grammar, while avoiding engagement in the really important philosophical questions, serves as a deterrent; he is an example of clearly inappropriate behavior that Plutarch’s readers will eschew.

Hence, Plutarch’s own dialogues reject such “sophistic” modes of argumentation and replace them with the proper attitude that is worthy of a member of the educated elite (*The Decline of Oracles* 412E):

Heracleon of Megara replied: “We are not interested in the question which of the two lambdas the verb ‘throw’ (*ballō*) loses in the future tense or from which positives the comparatives ‘worse’ and ‘better’ and ‘worst’ and ‘best’ are derived. For these and similar questions make us frown and knit our brows. But other questions we can discuss in a philosophical spirit (*philosophhein*), leaving our brows in place, and explore them quietly, without a fierce look and without irritating our interlocutors.”

It is obvious that this passage must be read as a preparation for the discussion which will follow. Sophistic debates about points of grammar are depicted as leading to aggressive behavior, which is unworthy of cultivated gentlemen. Plutarch’s own dialogue, on the other hand, will be a perfect example of the way in which educated readers will discuss intellectually stimulating matters: they will remain calm, they will stay focused on the subject, and they will not let personal ambition or vain rivalry disrupt their civilized discussions.

It is time to conclude our analysis of Plutarch’s relationship with the Second Sophistic. We began with the observation that Plutarch’s world is not the world of the Second Sophistic; we suspected that one reason for this was his chronological and geographical separation from the centers of this movement. There is certainly some truth in that: we will never know how Plutarch would have seen the Second Sophistic had he lived thirty years later, during its heyday, and had he traveled to Asia Minor. However, we have seen that his ideological detachment from sophistic attitudes is even more important. Plutarch had received rhetorical training; he knew a good deal about sophists, their profession, and their activities, and he expected his readers to have at least some knowledge of the Second Sophistic. But Plutarch was not interested in providing information about the sophists; instead, he used the Second Sophistic as an ideological construct: sophists and their attitudes are often depicted as a foil for behavior that Plutarch wants to present as appropriate and reasonable. This is especially visible in the area which Plutarch describes as being most typical of sophists, their ambition and competitiveness: sophists are forever quarreling about minor points of grammar and style, neglecting important ethical and philosophical issues. This behavior is not only useless to themselves and their audience, but can even hurt them – the case of the sophist Niger who died because he did not want

to give in is a cautionary tale in this respect. Plutarch uses this sophistic attitude as a counter-image to define his own style of philosophical dialogue and thus, ultimately, his own style of life.

As we have seen, terms such as “sophist” and “sophistic” gradually became expressions of praise and social distinction in the late first and second centuries CE. Nevertheless, they still continued to be contested and debated, even during the heyday of the Second Sophistic: philosophers such as Epictetus or physicians such as Galen were critical of sophistic oratory and emphasized the derogatory connotations of the term “sophist,” often with reference to Plato’s dialogues; some writers (such as Maximus of Tyre) are difficult to pigeonhole within the spectrum of “sophist vs. philosopher”; others (such as Dio Chrysostom or Lucian) framed their repeated crossings of the boundaries between these spheres in terms of biographical constructions, as “conversions” from sophistry to serious philosophical thinking; and even someone like Aelius Aristides, who was clearly a sophist in the eyes of his contemporaries and who defended the sophists against Plato’s criticism, was reluctant to call himself a sophist.⁶ “Sophist” continued to be less a clear and unequivocal description than a highly dynamic, emotionally and culturally loaded attribute, a title which members of the elite were eager to obtain or which they abhorred and set up as the “other” of their own intellectual position.

If we had to rely on Plutarch alone, our picture of sophistic oratory in the first century CE would be severely distorted. Plutarch depicts sophistic declamations as essentially belonging into the classroom. Only rarely do we get glimpses of the public acclaim which sophists received; Plutarch does not mention sophists such as Nicetes of Smyrna or Dionysius of Miletus. As I have tried to show, it was less the chronological and/or geographical distance than the ideological detachment which is responsible for this distorted image.

NOTES

- 1 See Bowersock (1969), Gleason (1995), Schmitz (1997), Whitmarsh (2005).
- 2 On Philostratus’ account of the prehistory of the Second Sophistic, see Bowersock (1969) 8–10; Russell (2001) 18–20; Whitmarsh (2005) 4–5.
- 3 The unusual word “thinkery” (*phrontistērion*) is an allusion to Aristophanes’ comedy *The Clouds*, where Socrates’ house is given this facetious name. Aeschines left Athens in 330 BCE, yet Alexander did not die until 323, so something is certainly wrong in Philostratus’ account.
- 4 On ancient authors who write about Aeschines, see Kindstrand (1982).
- 5 On the medical aspects of this anecdote, see Renehan (2000); on its significance in Plutarch’s ethical thinking, see Van Hoof (2010) 234–235.
- 6 See Behr (1968) 106–107; Stanton (1973); Moles (1978); Sidebottom (2009).

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CHAPTER 3

The Role of Philosophy and Philosophers in the Imperial Period

Michael Trapp

By the time Plutarch was growing up in the middle decades of the first century CE, philosophy – *philosophia* – was a well-entrenched and time-honored, if not entirely uncontroversial, constituent of Greco-Roman high culture, with an importance that modern notions of the nature and role of philosophy may not help us ideally to understand. There are of course enough similarities to justify the use of the same name: the ambition to discover the most insightful way of thinking and talking about any given topic, and to produce analyses that illuminate by getting beyond everyday perceptions; a commitment to argument and giving reasons, allied to an apparently inexhaustible tendency to reciprocal disagreement; and so on. But there are also large differences, which must be given full weight. In particular, any sense that the proper business of philosophy is theoretical rather than practical; or that it properly goes on principally in an academic environment, with excursions into the wider world of society and politics and individual action being a matter of applying the results of philosophy rather than doing the thing itself; or that on the map of intellectual and spiritual activity there are lines to be drawn between Philosophy and Science and between Philosophy and Religion – all this helps to highlight what has changed in the profile of philosophy since Plutarch's time rather than what has stayed the same. Also relatively foreign to modern perceptions, but crucial to those of his era, is a sense of philosophy as one of the glories of a truly cultured society, whose distinguished representatives over the years had made incomparable contributions to the literary as well as the intellectual heritage of Hellenism.

1. The Scope of *Philosophia*

The subject area(s) over which the *philosophia* of Plutarch's era claimed authority could hardly have been broader. The standard description, current since the later fourth century BCE, distinguished three constituent fields, called either "physics," "ethics," and "logic," or some variation on this trio. A quotation from a second-century handbook, the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous, will help to clarify what is covered by each individually, and what the combination adds up to; Alcinous gives his layout a distinctively Platonist color, but the underlying analysis is a shared one:

The concern of the *philosophos*, according to Plato, would seem to be channeled in three directions: (1) the contemplation and understanding of what exists, (2) the performance of what is morally good, and (3) the actual study of reason. [...]

Dialectical philosophy [i.e. logic] is divided into the processes of division, definition, <analysis,> induction, and syllogistic; and this last in turn is divided into the demonstrative, which concerns the necessary syllogism, the epichirematic, which deals with syllogisms based on reputable opinion, and thirdly the rhetorical, which concerns the enthymeme, which is termed an "incomplete" syllogism; and in addition sophisms. This latter activity is not really a primary concern of the philosopher, but is something unavoidable.

Of practical philosophy [i.e. ethics], one part is concerned with the care of morals, another with the administration of the household, another with the state and its preservation. Of these the first is called ethics, the second economics, and the third politics.

Of theoretical philosophy [i.e. physics], that part which is concerned with the motionless and primary causes and such as are divine is called theology; that which is concerned with the motion of the heavenly bodies, their revolutions and periodic returns, and the constitution of the visible world is called physics; and that which makes use of geometry and the other branches of mathematics is called mathematics. (Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 3.1–4, adapted from Dillon (1993) 4–5)

Philosophia, that is to say, runs all the way from the ultimate structure of reality and the nature of the divine, via cosmology, astronomy, the study of the natural world (including living beings), mathematics, modes of reasoning and argument, political theory, and social organization, to ethical theory and the moral well-being of the individual human agent. It is a comprehensive discipline, operating at the deepest level of understanding across the whole range of the real, and embracing all of the most central human concerns; in our terms, it combines the authority of Science with that of Religion, and other things besides.

An individual *philosophos* could of course concentrate his efforts and cultivate a speciality in one of the constituent areas rather than another, but always with a sense of the larger system to which the individual area belonged, and always with an eye to a general agreement – itself constitutive of the philosophical outlook – that there is a hierarchy to be acknowledged across the system of the whole. A pair of images, connected particularly with the Stoics but expressing a shared view, compared *philosophia* with an egg and with a walled garden. If *philosophia* is an egg, then logic is the protecting outer shell, physics the nurturing white, and ethics the inmost, fertile yoke; if *philosophia* is a garden, then logic is the enclosing wall, physics the soil, and ethics

the fruit (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 7.40; Sextus Empiricus, *Against the Professors* 7.17–19). Ethics is the heart; the point of the whole structure is practical and personal. It is there to allow its practitioners not just to achieve theoretical understanding, but also to become the right kind of person, lead the right kind of life, and to achieve the kind of fulfillment (happiness – *eudaimonia*) that the plan of the world marks out for human beings. The various competing schools of philosophical thought (of which more shortly) had diverging ideas about what exactly was out there in the world to be understood, and what exactly human fulfillment consisted in; but they shared the conviction inherited from the Platonic Socrates and consolidated by Aristotle that the objective towards which all philosophical activity was ultimately directed was right being, right living, and happiness.

From the inside of this system of ideas, therefore, philosophy was an activity of extreme importance, for humanity collectively and for every thinking human individually, and its practitioners past and present deserved a respect bordering on reverence.

O philosophy, life's leader, you who search out virtue and banish vice! Without you, what could I have been, what could human life altogether have been? You brought cities into being, you summoned scattered humans to lead their lives in the bonds of society; you joined them together first with houses, then with the institution of marriage, then with the interchange of writing and speech; you invented law, you were their teacher in morals and in learning. [...] To you I now dedicate myself profoundly and completely; one day lived well and in conformity to your precepts is preferable to an everlasting life of error.

So Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* (5.2.5), presenting his first-century BCE Roman readership with what was intended not as a merely personal declaration of allegiance, but as an assertion of the right and civilized – Greek – view. For the corresponding view of philosophers, we can turn to a passage from the satirist Lucian's dialogue *The Fisherman*, in which his character Parrhesiades ("Straight-talker") praises them enthusiastically as

legislators for the best life, who stretch out their hands to help those who are striving towards it and proffer the best and most constructive advice, for anyone who neither transgresses nor slides back from it, but fixes his gaze intently on the rules that you have set forth, and shapes and directs his own life in accordance with them. (*Fisherman* 30)

In context, the point of this praise may be to draw attention to how badly most contemporary philosophers live up to their calling, but it nevertheless expresses a widespread perception of how they ought to be regarded if doing their job properly.

2. Public and Social Profile

Philosophy in this culture is thus both a professional calling, with its own relatively restricted circle of specialist practitioners, and a life-project to which any thinking person ought to feel obliged to subscribe. To call someone, whether a contemporary or a figure from the past, "*philosophos*" was therefore to identify him either as a professional, whose principal activity lay in studying, debating, teaching, propagating, and representing a

particular school of philosophical thought, or as someone who, whatever other kinds of identity he may have had (as magistrate, merchant, civic benefactor, virtuoso public speaker or whatever), also subscribed on some level to the pursuit of the good life through philosophic truth, and the application of that truth to his day-to-day behavior and outlook.

On this two-level definition of its practitioners (in some ways parallel to the distinction between a professional priesthood and the body of the faithful in a Judeo-Christian or Islamic context), philosophy enjoyed a substantial and respected presence in city communities across the Greek-speaking world of Plutarch's day. Perhaps most simply and obviously, professional philosophers were acknowledged as providers of an advanced level of education, complementary (or for some even alternative) to the higher training in the arts of persuasive speaking offered by teachers of rhetoric. In this capacity, they assembled identifiable groups of pupils, and gave lectures, seminars, and reading-classes that took place at specified places and times and could either be restricted to paid-up subscribers or open to a more general public as well. And in this capacity, they attracted approving official notice, in the form of the possibility of exemption from various forms of taxation and other financial obligation (*ateleia*), granted by Imperial legislation to practitioners of arts beneficial to the community. The very first form of this legislation seems not to have covered philosophers (as opposed to teachers of grammar and rhetoric, and doctors), but from the time of either Vespasian or Domitian to that of Antoninus Pius they too could be freely nominated, and were officially endorsed as ornaments of their cities (Bowersock (1969) 33; Griffin (1971) 279–280; Millar (1977) 491–506).

But the high public profile was not restricted to the professional philosophical educators of the present, or to their strictly educational activities. Both professional and “lay” philosophers alike could be honored by the dedication to them of inscriptions and statues in public space, identifying them by reference to their philosophical commitments, combined or not as the case might be with other acknowledged marks of distinction (Tod (1957); Trapp (2007) 246–247). And to complement the philosophers of the present, images of the great figures of the philosophical past could be found in abundance, represented on coins, in sculpted busts, herms, and full-length statues, in wall-painting and in mosaic floors (Trapp (2007) 247–248). A good many of these representations were shut away in private space, but many too were on public display, in forum and agora, in the stoas and gymnasia with which the classic philosophers of the fourth century were so intimately associated, and in the libraries which housed the carefully assembled copies of their works. A strong positive message emerges that philosophical commitment and activity is both a valued element in the civic life of the present, and an important constituent of a shared and ennobling cultural heritage.

It was, furthermore, widely acknowledged that the wisdom of philosophers entitled them to speak messages of truth to the powerful, both as ambassadors on behalf of their communities and as individual consultants. Civic leaders up to and including emperors could have their favored philosophical advisors, whether to be summoned as required, or kept close at hand in a way that has led scholars to speak of “philosophical chaplains” (Rawson (1989)). There were admittedly some rocky moments in this relationship, most spectacularly with the successive expulsions of philosophers from Rome that took place under Vespasian and Domitian; and the degree of closeness and influence was always liable to be exaggerated by enthusiastic admirers of the philosophers, as seems to have

been the case with stories of Dio Chrysostom's relations with Trajan (Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 1.7, building on Dio, *Orations* 1–4). But the sense that such a role was possible and appropriate was a real and significant one.

3. Encountering Philosophy

In the normal run of things, a young member of the leisured elite will not have had to wait until he was old enough to sign on with a *philosophos* for his first structured experience of philosophical material. It will have come instead, even if in a fairly preliminary form, in the course of his lessons with a *grammatikos*, the educational professional whose job it was to take pupils who knew already how to read and write, and to prepare them through a course of literary study and exercises for the rhetorical training with which their education would normally end. For the canon of classic works from which school reading was selected already included texts from the more literary end of the scale of philosophical writing: above all Plato's dialogues, but also Xenophon's Socratic works, the minor Socratics Aeschines and Antisthenes, and the exoteric works of Aristotle and his pupil Theophrastus (Quintilian, *Education of the Orator* 10.1.81–84; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 18.13–17; Theon, *Progymnasmata* 2). In addition, the teacher's exegesis of the texts read will often, even if not inevitably, have involved the exposition of items of philosophical doctrine, either because they were mentioned directly in the texts under discussion, or because of the belief that they were needed for a true understanding of the author's meaning (as above all in the kind of allegorical explanation of episodes from Homer that appear in the surviving scholia, and in such works as Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems* and the pseudo-Plutarchan *Life and Poetry of Homer*: Russell and Konstan (2005) xi–xxix; Keaney and Lamberton (1996) 10–29). Nor will this engagement with philosophical writing have been purely passive. At least some *grammatikoi* began their pupils on the series of rhetorical preparatory exercises – *progymnasmata* – that would be completed with the *rhetor*; and already such basic exercises as *mythos* – storytelling – could involve the analysis and recycling of material from the *Republic*, the *Symposium*, and the *Phaedo* (Theon, *loc. cit.*; Kennedy (2003) 9).

Engagement with philosophical writing continued with the more advanced cultivation of the skills of speaking presided over by the *rhetor*. Not only did philosophical classics continue to be recommended as models and materials for the more advanced of the *progymnasmata* – the *Timaeus* for *ekphrasis* (vivid description), for instance, or Xenophon's *Symposium* for *synkrisis* (comparison) – but one of the most advanced of all, *thesis*, the structured examination of a given topic, could be set on philosophical as well as practical or political themes: examples given by Theon and Aphthonius include whether the heavens are spherical, whether there are other worlds than ours, whether there are gods, and whether the gods exercise a providential concern for our world (Aphthonius, *Progymn.* 13; Theon, *Progymn.* 11).

For some, formal educational contact with philosophy will have ended here, to be followed by whatever further acquaintance their own reading and personal encounters in private and public space might bring. This must indeed have been the common pattern, as for most participants in the educational process at most times between the fourth century BCE and the fourth century CE, rhetoric – the acquisition of the skills of public

speaking – remained the natural culmination, and the obvious gateway to what they most wanted in adult life. Devotees of philosophy, however, of course hoped that the truly promising and reflective pupil would pass on from verbal and literary study to something deeper, after, or side by side with, or even in rare cases instead of, their higher rhetorical training. A passage from Plutarch's *On Listening to Lectures* shows how this could be presented as a mature, morally responsible choice, but one which at the same time was made less daunting by the acquaintance with philosophical writing already made with the *grammatikos*.

You have often heard that following God and obeying reason are one and the same thing. In the same way, I ask you to believe that in persons of good sense the passage from childhood to manhood is not a casting off of control, but a recasting of the controlling agent, since instead of some hired person or slave purchased with money people now take as the divine guide of their life reason (*logos*), whose followers alone deserve to be considered free. [...] And so you, who have been brought up for a long time in casual contact [...] ought to feel like an old friend when you come to *philosophia*, which alone can array young men in the manly and truly perfect adornment that comes from reason. (*On Listening* 1–2, 37d–38a)

As already hinted above, embarking on a formal higher education in philosophy was by this period not a question of entering an institution of the style of the fourth-century Academy or Lyceum; such establishments had never spread much beyond Athens, and even there they had characteristically failed to survive the physical destruction brought about by the Mithridatic and Roman civil wars of the first century BCE. It was instead a matter of signing on with an individual freelance tutor (*kathégētēs*), who had gathered together as large a group of pupils as local enthusiasm and his own pulling power allowed (Glucker (1976) 124–134). Rather than any elaborate structure of grades and sets, we should think instead in terms of a single mixed-age and mixed-ability seminar group, and a routine of activities that combined the close reading of classic philosophical texts with exegeses from the tutor, set-piece lectures on selected topics, exercises on logic, question-and-answer sessions, and student presentations, some of them restricted to the core group of paying pupils, and some open to visitors from a broader interested public. Examples can be found in Aulus Gellius' and Arrian's depictions of their respective philosophical tutors, the Platonist Calvenus Taurus and the Stoic Epictetus, in what Plutarch records of his teacher at Athens, Ammonius, and from somewhat later in Porphyry's *Life* of Plotinus (Clarke (1971) 55–99). There could also be individual arrangements, like that between Seneca and his teacher Sotion (*Ep.* 49.2, 108–17–21); and the seriously rich, rather than going out for instruction that would be shared with other pupils, could think of bringing a live-in tutor into their household.

There was no formally prescribed length to such a period of philosophical study; it would go on for as long as both pupil and instructor found profitable, tolerable, and affordable. Some few would emerge from it to set up as philosophical instructors in their own right; most would pass on to whatever adult career in public life and the management of business and property their family circumstances and fortunes dictated. For the latter group, as indeed for those who had gone along the rhetorical rather than the philosophical route in their higher education, there will have been no difficulty in maintaining an interest and an engagement with philosophical matters in their subsequent lives.

They could return as visitors to their old tutor's classes, or attend public lectures by him and by other resident or visiting philosophical speakers. They could read as consistently or as sporadically as they chose in philosophical writing at a whole range of levels of profundity and accessibility, in texts collected in their own libraries, loaned from friends, or borrowed from club (gymnasium) or public libraries. They could cultivate favored philosophical consultants, as Pliny reports cultivating and consulting the Stoic Euphrates, both in the provinces and at Rome, in *Epistles* 1.10. And they could expect, indeed feel themselves required as proof of their status as educated men, from time to time to talk philosophy at gatherings of their social circle, above all at symposia. As is demonstrated by Plutarch's *Table Talk* (*Symposium Discussions*), in which some fifteen out of the ninety-five issues debated are philosophical, but also later by the *Deipnosophists* of Athenaeus, some knowledge of and capacity to talk intelligently about philosophers and philosophical doctrines, and to engage in some level of philosophical argument, was widely reckoned to be among the defining characteristics of the cultivated and socially superior.

4. A Call to Personal Commitment

For some, continuing philosophical engagement will have remained at the level of contributing to and appreciating educated social chat, or perhaps of intermittent immersion in absorbing intellectual puzzles. One imagines such people as constituting the principal audience and readership for the large quantity of light philosophical literature produced in the first few centuries CE – works like Apuleius' *Florida*, *Apology*, and *God of Socrates* in Latin, and Maximus of Tyre's *Orations* and the philosophical satires of Lucian in Greek. But philosophical teachers will have hoped for a deeper, more demanding, and more continuous engagement, at least from those of their former pupils who had really taken the point. Rightly understood and taken seriously, philosophy was, as explained above, the art of life. From the philosophical point of view, therefore, real commitment to it ought to mean something more than an acknowledgment of a body of knowledge and doctrines, and appreciation of a corpus of fine writing; it ought to mean a continuing – indeed, lifelong – dedication to a personal project of self-improvement, a cumulative process of working on one's outlook, perceptions, and emotions, so as to approximate ever closer to the ideals of character-structure and relation to the world established by the great philosophers as right and fulfilling for thinking human beings (Hadot (1995) 47–125; Trapp (2007) 28–62).

Seneca in his *Moral Epistles*, Epictetus in Arrian's write-up of his classroom discourses, and Plutarch in the ethical treatises of the *Moralia* (*On Measuring One's Own Progress Towards Virtue*, *On the Control of Anger*, etc.) map out either a Stoic or a Platonist version of such a program of vigilance and self-molding, in which it is assumed that a great deal of work will be needed – because everybody starts at such a huge distance from where they ought to be – and elaborate instructions are given for the long haul that will be involved. Real, serious commitment to philosophy in this personal sense – the old Socratic sense of “caring for one's soul” – involves such exercises as (in Epictetus' version) arresting each and every impression of apparent good or bad in the world around you and interrogating it for its truthfulness before admitting it (or not) to your mental furniture, or (in Plutarch's version) regularly reviewing your dreams, to see whether or

not your unruly appetites and desires – which show themselves the more clearly when the control of reason is relaxed in sleep – are or are not becoming more docile over time (Arrian, *Discourses of Epict.* 2.18.25, *Handbook* 1.5; Plutarch, *Progress in Virtue* 82f–83e). Philosophy, to be truly itself, is supposed to make a deep personal difference, and to mark its devotees out from the normal run of unreflecting humanity, although opinions differed among professionals over how far this apartness should be visible to the casual observer.

5. Choice and Division

Philosophical commitment did not however come in just one flavor, for the landscape of *philosophia* itself was not a single, unified terrain. It was made up instead, as it had been since the later fourth century BCE, of a multiplicity of reciprocally critical schools of thought (*haireseis, sectae*), each with its own version of the truth about reality, human nature, and happiness, and its own corresponding modulation of the philosophic life, propounded and defended in vigorous reciprocal polemic with its competitors. Each of these had originated with the ambition of getting closer to the truth of things and of life than any earlier attempt; none had succeeded in driving the competition from the field. Each since the heroic foundational period of the fourth century BCE had had a different specific history of variable popularity, rapprochement, and estrangement with respect to its rivals, or alternation between skepticism and dogmatism. All of them, however, remained in the field in the first century CE, represented either by a body of authoritative, classic writing by its founders and early practitioners, or by a loose network of contemporary experts, or by both. The challenge to choose *philosophia* thus presented itself in the first instance as the challenge to make a narrower sectarian as well as a broader ideological/existential choice, to make oneself not simply a *philosophos*, but a Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic, Platonist, Pyrrhonist or Academic Skeptic, Cynic, or even Pythagorean.

Reactions to this challenge and this state of affairs varied. For some, the spectacle of such disunity, in what was supposed to be the pursuit of ultimate truth (which must, surely, be one and indivisible), ranked as a scandal, and they looked for ways of persuading themselves and others that common ground could be found between the sects, so that to commit to one of them would not necessarily be to reject the others. An early and influential example of this tendency, at a high level of intellectual sophistication, was the argument of Antiochus of Ascalon, aimed at reorienting the Platonic tradition in the first century BCE, that Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics were all fundamentally in agreement (Dillon (1977) 52–62; Barnes (1989)). A later and more superficial development of the outlook can be found in *Orations* 4, 26, and 29–33 of the Platonizing lecturer Maximus of Tyre. The only sect which Maximus pointedly excludes from his happy picture of concord and common enterprise is Epicureanism, damned as always by spokesmen of the Socratic tradition for its scandalously unacceptable theology, and its equally scandalous dethroning of reason and moral virtue in favor of the pursuit of pleasure (Trapp (1997) xxii–xxx).

A harder-headed but surprisingly rare alternative reaction is represented by the doctor and medical scientist Galen. In his treatise *On the Affections and Errors of the Soul*, speaking of his youth in the 140s CE, Galen records how, with his father's guidance and

encouragement, he took pains to attend classes with four different philosophical teachers in Pergamum, a Platonist, a Stoic, a Peripatetic, and an Epicurean, but to commit himself entirely to none of them. This policy, he continues, he has maintained into adult life, subjecting all sects to thorough examination, and learning from them, but declaring allegiance to none (*Affections and Errors* 1.8.41–43). Galen is not in this trying to free himself from all forms of the authority of the past. In what matters most to him as a doctor and physiologist, as well as in some degree in moral matters, he defers to the Hippocrates of the by now canonized Hippocratic corpus (which, however, he reads through decidedly Platonizing glasses). The point is that, while constituting himself as an inquirer into truth of the most fundamental kind, he nevertheless refuses, in a manner unusual for his culture, to conduct that inquiry from within one of the great established schools of philosophical thought (Nutton (2004) 221–223; Hankinson (1992)).

The default option, however, seems to have remained to accept the sectarian outlook, to commit to one school of thought in distinction from the others, and to perpetuate the game of defending one's own and attacking the opposition by all means available (Sedley (1989)). This was what both the contemporary institutional landscape of school philosophy and the mass of polemical writing that had accumulated since early Hellenistic times both encouraged. And this is what springs most readily to the eye in surviving Imperial-period texts: in Epictetus laying into Academics and Epicureans from a Stoic vantage point; in Diogenes of Oenoanda decrying Stoics and Platonists in an Epicurean perspective; in the Pyrrhonist (Skeptic) Sextus Empiricus attempting to undermine the claims of any and all of the dogmatic sects; and in Platonist Plutarch's determined attacks on the absurdities and self-contradictions of Epicureans and Stoics.

6. Professional Output and Forms of Communication

Professional upholders of philosophy lived up to their role by writing and publishing as well as by teaching. The range of written forms they used embraced both texts that sprang directly from their classroom activity and others that reflected different aspects of their role as experts in the pursuit of higher truth; and it mirrored the contemporary situation and recent development of their discipline.

A format of steadily growing importance in the first and second centuries CE, even if it had not yet acquired the centrality to philosophical writing that it was to enjoy in another couple of hundred years' time, was the commentary – the section-by-section or topic-by-topic exegesis of an authoritative classic text, such as Plato's *Timaeus* or *Gorgias*, or Aristotle's *Ethics* or *Prior Analytics*. This is a very obvious instance of a written form that corresponds directly to a classroom activity, but it is also a very important reflection of a larger feature of the philosophical culture of the times. Not only the huge volume of philosophical writing by now in existence, but also the widespread sense that the basic territory of truth had already been mapped for any school of thought by its great founders and early champions, favored a feeling that one of the main tasks for the modern thinker was to expound and clarify. This was a task that could be performed on several different levels, not only that of explaining difficult aspects to the relative beginner, but also at the more advanced level of resolving ambiguities and filling in gaps left by the classic thinker

being commented on, and adjusting and rephrasing his thought so as to take account of developments and criticisms brought by his rivals and successors. In the latter version, commentary could become not simply a derivative and secondary process, but something discreetly innovative and original, a means of advancing philosophical analysis and debate, rather than simply marking time. Surviving examples from the first two centuries CE include the anonymous commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* and Aspasius' on Aristotle's *Ethics*; among those now known only at second hand are Calvenus Taurus' on the *Timaeus* and the *Gorgias* (Sedley (1997); Barnes (1999); Konstan (2001); Tuominen (2009)).

Related to the commentary, and like it a written form closely connected to classroom procedures, was the collection of *Problems* or *Questions* (*Problemata*, *Quaestiones*): knotty points to be "talked through" at length, of the kind that could be "set before" the teacher by a particularly alert pupil, or "proposed to" the class by the teacher. In their written, published versions, such sets of questions could be assembled either by text (as in *Problems relating to the Timaeus*), or by author (*Problems in Plato*), or by theme (*Problems in Physics*). But the classroom and the need to expound the philosophical classics did not impose a stranglehold. Philosophical professionals also continued to write and circulate more broadly based essays and treatises on special topics (like the *On Chance*, *On Fate*, and *That Justice is a fact of Nature* of Alexander of Aphrodisias, or the *On Old Age* of Diogenes of Oenoanda), and on larger areas of theory (like the *Elements of Ethics* of Hierocles (Ramelli (2009), or Diogenes' *Ethics* and *Physics*).

Works of controversy and polemic, attacking the perceived errors and absurdities of other schools of thought, and defending the author's own, also continued to be produced, as they had been since the early Hellenistic period. Alexander of Aphrodisias, for instance, composed a *Refutation of Galen's criticism of Aristotle's theory of motion* and a *Refutation of Xenocrates on Species and Kind* (both now preserved only in Arabic translations); among the Platonists, Nicostratus published an attempted demolition of Aristotle's *Categories* (Dillon (1977) 233–236), and Calvenus Taurus a treatise setting out the points of difference between Platonism and the Stoics (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 12.5.5); the Stoic Cornutus also wrote an attack on Aristotle's *Categories*, perhaps in commentary form (Gottschalk (1987) 1111–1112).

On another level again, philosophers also continued to give thought to effective communication not only with professional adversaries and pupils, but also with a wider lay public outside a formal scholastic context. In *Discourses* 3.23, Arrian presents Stoic Epictetus attacking those who take too meretriciously rhetorical an approach to communicating philosophical doctrine; but at the same time Epictetus is made to concede that a distinctive "protreptic" stylistic register can be needed for this purpose (3.23.33–38), echoing and endorsing recommendations made earlier by the first-century BCE Academic Philo of Larissa (in Stobaeus' *Anthology* 2.7). Specific references for our period are lacking, but there can be no doubt that philosophers continued to compose and circulate protreptic discourses (*Protreptikoi Logoi*) in the tradition already contributed to by everyone from Aristotle to Posidonius, Cicero, and the emperor Augustus. From another angle, the Epicurean inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda shows him continuing the exploitation, begun by Epicurus himself, of letter-form as an accessible way of helping friends and contacts with individual points of difficulty; and the inscription in itself is further testimony to resourceful thinking about how to bring philosophy to the widest possible audience (Gordon (1996) 94–127; Clay (2007)).

Publication did not, however, depend in all cases on the initiative of a philosopher himself. It was also established practice for pupils and admirers to circulate texts, working either from their own classroom notes or from their teacher's script, or from some combination of the two. This could be done both with formal lectures and with the teacher's less structured classroom exchanges and discourses (the latter, in fact, being the proper ancient sense of the much-abused term "diatribe"). Examples can be found in the eleven-book *Outline of Platonic Doctrines from the Lectures of Gaius* published by Albinus, now lost and known only from a manuscript's contents list (Paris. gr. 1962, fol. 146v); and in Arrian's *Discourses (Diatribai) of Epictetus*, which survive in part (four books out of an original eight).

7. Integration and Ambivalence

In everything that has been said so far in this chapter about the nature and standing of philosophy in the first two centuries CE, the picture has been of an activity that enjoyed a secure and comfortable place, well integrated into the society and culture of the times. Philosophers have appeared as a respected and valued element in their city communities, both for the active contributions to education and other aspects of civic life made by the current generation of practitioners, and for the luster added to local pride by great figures from the past. They are acknowledged, on all levels up to and including the Imperial throne, as repositories of wisdom not only about the fundamental nature of the world (including the divine) and right reasoning, but also about the right way to live and find fulfillment. Their integration into the higher reaches of education, combined with the absorption of great philosophical texts of the past into the canon of acknowledged literary classics, guarantees them their place as an indispensable constituent of *paideia*, "Culture" or "Cultivation" with a capital "C."

It might therefore seem that in giving his allegiance to philosophy and philosophical values, a young member of the leisured elite in the first century CE would be making an entirely safe, conventional, and uncontroversial choice. This is not in fact unambiguously the case. Neither the intellectual authority of *philosophia* – its rights over the subject-matter it claimed as its own – nor the civic standing of its practitioners, nor the security of its place on the curriculum of *paideia* went without challenge, in the Greek-speaking as well as the Latin-speaking regions of the empire.

In purely numerical terms, there were never as many professional philosophers in operation as doctors, teachers of literature, and teachers of rhetoric; a far greater proportion of the educated elite completed their higher studies in oratory than ever did in philosophy. On this level, the perceived civic usefulness of philosophers was simply not as great as that of other professional groups. This is part of the reason why – as seems to have been the case – philosophers were not included in the first instance in Imperial legislation on civic immunities, but only added in a subsequent amendment; and why when restrictions on qualifying numbers were eventually imposed as an economy measure, in the later second century, it was the philosophers who came off worst of all the professional groups covered.

But there was room for ideological unease as well. Some of this was of a fairly blunt and obvious kind. It was easy for professional teachers of rhetoric to resent philosophers

not only as rivals in the competition for pupils, but also (perhaps more intensely) for the perceived arrogance of their claims to superior intellectual rights, even over territory (reasoning, persuasion, the articulation of sound moral values) to which they felt themselves to be entitled. This resentment is neatly exemplified in Quintilian's discussion of the place of philosophy in his *Education of the Orator*, where he firmly rejects the claim that only philosophers can talk about great moral topics, pointing on the one hand to the sterling record of orators and rhetoricians, and on the other to the manifest failure of philosophers consistently to live up to their own principles (*Education* 1 Pref. 15–19; 12.3.11–12). At the same time, Quintilian's discussion exemplifies another possible line of resistance: he complains also of the unnecessary sophistication and empty theoretical bias of the philosophical approach to morality, contrasting it with the "Roman sage," who works "not with ivory-tower debate, but in practical experience and achievement." As is confirmed by Tacitus' famous comment on Agricola, that in his young days he was keener on philosophy "than was seemly for a Roman of the senatorial class" (*Agricola* 4.3), it was always open to Romans to play the ethnic card, and keep philosophy at a careful distance because it was Greek, and over-subtle.

This does not however mean that the situation was radically different among Greeks. The fact that philosophers were more numerous in Greek-speaking communities, and their works more intimately entwined with the culture, did not make them immune from comparable forms of suspicion and resistance. Here too there was professional resistance and criticism from the representatives of rhetorical education (exemplified at the *prima donna* end of the scale by Aelius Aristides' two speeches against Plato, *Orr.* 2 and 3), but room also for more general forms of skepticism and reserve. The claims to both mastery of truth and transcendent moral authority that the very ideology of their calling committed philosophers to left them vulnerable to this kind of reaction. On the intellectual front, the spectacle of these self-proclaimed masters of truth still squabbling among themselves without agreement, though it might propel a few into philosophical skepticism, was at least as likely to look simply ridiculous. On the moral front, real and imagined cases of a failure on the part of philosophers to live up to the demands of the Virtue they so loudly claimed to understand also opened them to indignation and ridicule. Both kinds of reaction can be most clearly seen in the philosophical satires of Lucian: amused skepticism about the claims to truth in such works as *Hermotimus* and *Menippus*, comic indignation at perceived moral failings in, for instance, *The Fisherman* and *Symposium*. But we might also want to reflect on the implications of Aulus Gellius' story of a Stoic in a storm at sea, suspected by his fellow passengers of infidelity to his own teaching when he seemed to show signs of unphilosophic perturbation (*Gellius Attic Nights* 19.1): this seems to have been a culture in which philosophers were permanently liable to scrutiny, in a none-too-friendly expectation of failure.

Lucian's satire, however, demonstrates the complexity of this state of affairs. Even as he holds philosophers up to ridicule, he both displays and expects in his audience a considerable knowledge of them and their discipline: names, doctrines, arguments, characteristic language. For all that it could be, even had to be, found funny on occasion, philosophy could not be ignored. Knowing about it, being able to recognize the major names and ideas, and being able to talk about them with some semblance of knowledge, was part of what it meant to be an educated person. And therein lay a further potential problem. Because to know about philosophy was, necessarily, to know that a central part

of what philosophy said was “it is impossible to live well – to be a proper human being, and to be happy – without me.” Philosophy, taken as seriously as it showed itself to want to be taken, posed an evangelical challenge, to life-changing commitment of a kind that could make awkward demands on the individual; in particular, it could demand the adoption of values and targets at odds with those of ordinary civic society. To accept this challenge in full was too tall an order for most; but at the same time, to reject it too directly and too explicitly would, given the cultural status of philosophy, have been to run the risk of seeming both undereducated and irresponsible.

What were needed, therefore, were ways of acknowledging philosophy – talking about it, displaying acquaintance, deferring to it on some level – that still managed to keep it at a comfortable distance. Philosophical satire of Lucian’s kind, displaying knowledge and some kind of at least intermittent affection, can be seen as one means to this end. But so too can the mass of other kinds of writing about philosophy that were current in the Imperial period: potted summaries of doctrine (like the pseudo-Plutarchan *Opinions of the Philosophers*); biographies and histories of individual schools (like the works borrowed from by Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives*); collections of supposed letters of great philosophers of the past (like those of Socrates and the Socratics, or Diogenes, or Crates); and the philosophical oratory of the likes of Apuleius and Maximus of Tyre.

This then was the context in which Plutarch made his own choice of philosophical commitment and of a particular philosophical school in the late 50s or early 60s CE. His course took him through only some of the variants and possibilities outlined in this chapter, but almost all of them will be found reflected in his work in some way or another, provided he is read, as he deserves to be, between the lines as well as on them.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Straightforward summaries of the state of development of some individual schools of thought in the early Imperial period can be found in Whittaker (1987 – Platonism), Ferguson (1990 – Epicureanism), and Gottschalk (1987 – Peripateticism). The essays collected in Sorabji and Sharples (2007) combine surveys of the whole range of sects with more detailed consideration of some key topics, while those in Griffin and Barnes (1989) and Barnes and Griffin (1997) concentrate on individual issues. The classic extended study of Platonic doctrine through this period, Dillon (1977), also includes a helpful quantity of contextual material in his introductions to individual thinkers.

Stimulating discussion of developments in the style, spirit, and procedures of philosophy over the early centuries CE can be found in Glucker (1976), on the nature of schools and sects (ch. 4); in Sedley (1989), on philosophical allegiance; and in Sedley (1997), on the beginnings of the commentary tradition. The classic essay on philosophy as individual life-project is the opening item

in Hadot (1995), with Long (2002) providing an absorbing analysis of how it can be worked out in the teaching of an individual (Stoic) master; Trapp (2007), ch. 2 attempts to survey variations on the project across the different schools of thought. Frischer (1982) and Gordon (1996) provide lively and imaginative discussions of Epicurean philosophical propagandizing.

The social and political profile of philosophy is most fully dealt with by Hahn (1989), Dillon (2002), and Trapp (2007), chs. 1 and 8–9. Clarke (1971) is a clear and concise explanation of the place of philosophers in Imperial-period education, and Zanker (1995) is fundamental on their depiction in visual art. Lucian's satirical portrayal of philosophers is dealt with, though too briefly and schematically, by Jones (1986), chs. 3 and 9.

PART II

Plutarch's *Moralia*

CHAPTER 4

Plutarch and Platonism

John Dillon

There is no question that Plutarch regarded himself as being, in philosophy, a Platonist. The variety of Platonism that he professed, however, grew out of the various developments in doctrine and formulations that had occurred over the century or so before his birth, and in particular the developments associated with the names of Antiochus of Ascalon (c. 130–68 BCE) and Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. c. 40 BCE), who, between them, caused the Platonic tradition to embrace many aspects of both Stoicism and Aristotelianism, as well as, in Eudorus' case, significant aspects of the Pythagorean tradition. What may appear to us, therefore, as “eclecticism” would be taken by Plutarch rather as the assumption into Platonism of certain formulations from these other traditions which did no more than illuminate various essentially Platonic intuitions. In his ethics and his logic, Plutarch inclines to Aristotelianism, while in certain aspects of his physics (notably, in the *logos*-theory which can be discerned in his essay *On Isis and Osiris*) he seems indebted to Stoicism. We shall see at various points also evidence of Pythagorean influence. His early interest in number symbolism (*De E* 387F), as well as his youthful objection to meat-eating, as evidenced by his early double essay *On the Eating of Flesh*, and his sympathy with animals and championing of their rationality, in the essay on *The Cleverness of Animals* and the dialogue *That Irrational Animals Use Reason*, seem to betray a period of more enthusiastic Pythagoreanism before, as he puts it himself in the dialogue *De E* (387F), he learned moderation on “entering the Academy.”

In this chapter, I will deal first with Plutarch's ethics, then turn to his “physics,” or metaphysics, and lastly to what we know of his logic, with the aim of discerning, in each case, where he fits on the spectrum of Middle Platonism, between the opposing poles of Stoicism and Aristotelianism (with Pythagoreanism lurking in the wings, as a sort of “third dimension”), and also those of monism and dualism, which constitute something of a tension in his thought.

1. Ethics

The Telos, or “End of Goods”

For Plutarch, as for all Middle Platonists of whom we have knowledge subsequent to Eudorus, the supreme object of human existence is “likeness to God” (*homoiosis theôî*) – not, as for Antiochus (following the Stoics), “conformity with Nature.” We find this expressed well in a passage of the dialogue *On Delays in the Divine Punishment* (550D), which begins by quoting Plato, *Theaetetus* 176E, and continues by summarizing Plato’s encomium of sight in *Timaeus* 47A–C. It is through our eyes, rather than by means of our intellect, that Plutarch says that this likeness is to be achieved. The eyes, however, are obviously only the agents of the intellect in this matter, as we can see by comparing with this passage his remarks at the beginning of the *Isis and Osiris* (*De Is. et Os.* 351CD), where he specifies that God grants us insight and intelligence (*nous kai phronesis*), which is his special characteristic, in order that we may assimilate ourselves to Him. This position would doubtless have been developed further in the lost work *What is the End according to Plato?* (Lamprias Catalogue no. 177).

The Virtues

On the subject of virtue and happiness, Plutarch inclines on the whole to the more “broadminded” ethical position of Antiochus of Ascalon, as against the degree of Stoic-Pythagorean asceticism observable in such thinkers as Eudorus and Philo of Alexandria. Significantly, his terminology in this area is Aristotelian rather than Stoic.

In his essay *On Moral Virtue* we find a useful statement of his ethical theory. Probably a relatively early work, it takes the form of an attack on the Stoic, and in particular Chrysippan, position that the soul is unitary, and that there is no such thing as a distinct irrational part. Moral virtue, he specifies at the beginning (440D), in conformity with Aristotelian doctrine (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 1103a3ff.), is to be distinguished from theoretical virtue, in that it is concerned with emotion (*pathos*) as its matter and reason (*logos*) as its form, whereas theoretical virtue is concerned solely with the rational part of the soul. In what follows (441E–442C), he traces the development of true ethical doctrine from Pythagoras down, first to Plato, and then to Aristotle, all of whom recognize that the soul is not unitary but bipartite. This allows Plutarch to adopt Aristotelian ethics unreservedly, in order to combat the Stoics. His doctrine, in fact, is taken from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, particularly Book II 5–7, the theory of the mean being expounded at 444C–445A, with much elaboration.

A topic not discussed in this chapter is the status of the three levels of good, the psychical, the corporeal, and the external, and their relation to the *telos*. Plutarch does, however, as a Platonist with Peripatetic sympathies, favor (451B–452C) “moderation of the passions” (*metriopatheia*) over their extirpation (*apatheia*). It is interesting to note how, in the process of stating this position (451BC), he makes use of what we would regard as a piece of Stoic terminology, but which he takes pleasure in using against them, the fourfold distinction of types of combination, cohesion (*hexis*), natural growth (*physis*), irrational soul and rational soul, to argue that an organism that possesses both the lower

and higher types, as does the human being, must possess those in between; that is to say, if one possesses cohesion, natural growth, and rationality, one must also possess the passionate and irrational soul.

Plutarch does in fact also hold that all three levels of good contribute to the *telos*, or to happiness. We find him in another polemical anti-Stoic treatise (*On Common Notions* 1060Cff.) attacking Chrysippus for not admitting bodily and external goods as forming an essential part of happiness, although nature herself commends them to us (cf. also fr. 144 Sandbach, from an admittedly rather rhetorical lost work *In Defense of Beauty*); so he comes across to us as a fairly thoroughgoing Peripateticizer in ethics, although his true views are frequently obscured in his more popular ethical treatises, where the tradition that he is following is predominantly Cynic-Stoic.

2. Physics

First Principles: "God," Monad, and Dyad

Plutarch's view of God – that is, of the active, or "male," first principle – is very much what one would expect of a Platonist of his era: God is real being, eternal, unchanging, non-composite, uncontaminated by matter (all these attributes derived from the speech of his revered teacher Ammonius in *De E* 392Eff., which may reasonably be taken to express Plutarch's views also). The fact that in this passage the subject of discussion is actually Apollo simply reminds us how, for philosophers like Plutarch, the various traditional gods have become aspects of divinity in general. God also knows all things (*De Is. et Os.* 351D) and directs all things (*De Is. et Os.* 382B). He thus exercises providence (*pronoia*) over all things, as will be discussed below. He is also presented, for instance at *De fac.* 944E, as "the object of striving for all nature," reflecting the influence on Middle Platonists of the Aristotelian doctrine of the Prime Mover (*Metaphysics* XII 7; *Physics* I 9).

Besides being "really existent," God also for Plutarch possesses the two other basic Platonic epithets: he is the Good (*On the Disappearance of Oracles* [*De def. or.*] 423D), and he is the One (*De E* 393BC). In this latter guise, he can be accommodated to the Pythagorean-Platonic pair of first principles, the Monad and the Indefinite Dyad (*De def. or.* 428F). In this important passage, Plutarch portrays the generation of Number from the action of the Monad on the Dyad in a manner reminiscent of the Old Academic Xenocrates, by whom he is much influenced (as we shall see below in connection with the generation of the soul), but a dualistic tone is introduced which seems to be a contribution of Plutarch himself. Admittedly, this pair of principles is produced here in connection with the origin of Number, but they are plainly also to be understood as the principles of all creation. The Indefinite Dyad, or *apeiria*, is presented as "the element underlying all formlessness and disorder," Number, and the cosmos; it is created by the One "slicing off" (429A) greater or smaller sections of this *apeiria*, and thus imposing limit on it; but it is also presented as a constant threat to good order. This second principle manifests itself at every level of Plutarch's universe, as disorderly, irrational soul, and as matter, but it is plainly something more than either of these.

At *Platonic Questions* [*Quaest. Plat.*] 3 (1002A), the same process of generation is outlined again, though here with the Dyad presented in a more positive light, and the

process is continued from number, through points, lines, surfaces, and solids, to bodies and “qualities of bodies that are generated through (physical) impulses” – a list designed, presumably, to cover every level of reality. Plutarch is here indebted, ultimately, to the formalization of Plato’s thought propounded by Xenocrates.

The Logos and the Form

The first principles, thus established, must relate to the world through suitable intermediaries. The first of these, though it makes an appearance only rarely in Plutarch’s surviving works, is the Logos, which seems to have found a home in at least some strands of post-Antiochian Platonism, as evidenced, a few generations before Plutarch, in the works of the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria. Indeed, its main appearance in Plutarch is in a somewhat mythological mode, in the essay *On Isis and Osiris*. Here, at 373AB, we find the two aspects of the Logos, the transcendent and the immanent, represented as the “soul” and the “body” of Osiris. His soul is “eternal and indestructible,” whereas his body, which equates to the Logos, or sum-total of the Forms, as immanent in the physical world, is (in mythological terms) repeatedly torn asunder by the monstrous Typhon, and is constantly being reassembled by Isis, representing the World Soul, as an entity which, while being essentially irrational, is nonetheless positively inclined (372F). Typhon, in turn, represents matter, or the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*, in its role as a principle of disorder. The reason-principles and Forms emanating from the transcendent Logos are imprinted upon the Receptacle like seals upon wax (an image taken from *Theaetetus* 191Cff.), and from these Isis composes the sensible world, symbolized by Horus.

We see the Forms, then, in the *De Is. et Os.*, in their immanent aspect, as the contents of the immanent Logos. In their transcendent aspect, “in themselves,” Plutarch plainly takes them as the thoughts of God, such as seems by his time to have become the Platonist consensus (cf. Alcinous, *Handbook of Platonism*, ch. 9). There is a clear instance of this in *On Delays in the Divine Punishment* 550D (cited above, in connection with the *telos*), where God himself is presented as the totality of the Forms, and thus the model (*paradeigma*) for the physical cosmos – indicating that Plutarch has rationalized the myth of the *Timaeus* to that extent at least. At *Quaest. Plat.* 3 (1001E–1002A), we find an interesting extrapolation of Plato’s account of the course of higher studies in *Republic* VI (525B–531D), where an intellectual progression from the study of harmony, through astronomy and the other mathematical sciences, should lead us by a process of “abstraction” (*aphairesis*) to the Forms, conceived of as pure monads – something that Plato may imply, but does not specify.

It must be admitted as somewhat troublesome that it is only in the *De Is. et Os.* that we observe the unequivocal appearance of a Logos-figure in Plutarch’s philosophical system, but one can only reflect that we are deprived of many of his most serious philosophical works. Certainly, Plutarch shows no sign of wishing to postulate a separate secondary divinity which would serve as a Demiurge, and his World Soul, as we have seen from his characterization of Isis, is not an entity capable of taking demiurgic initiatives. What we do find, on the other hand, rather disturbingly, is some traces of a subordinate divinity rather like a modified form of the Gnostic demiurge, standing, if not in opposition, then certainly in contrast to the supreme deity, and presiding more immediately over the

physical or, more properly, the sublunar world. Such a concept, which seems to owe something to the notion, from wherever derived, that it is actually the sublunar realm in which we dwell that is the realm of Hades, makes its appearance in the *De E* (393A–394C), where we find a contrast made between a supreme deity, denominated “Apollo” (etymologized as “Not-Many,” and therefore One), and “Plouton,” or “Hades,” who is the “god, or rather daemon, that presides over the nature which is involved in dissolution and generation” (394A). This latter entity is not to be regarded as evil, so much as simply the immanent and immediate administrator of the world of change and imperfection, freeing the supreme deity from direct involvement in this. It may thus be seen as to some extent taking over the role of the “Young Gods” of Plato’s *Timaeus*.

The Irrational Soul and Matter, and Plutarch’s Dualism

Plutarch’s dualistic tendencies have manifested themselves in the *De Is. et Os.* (373AB), in the description of the Forms being “seized by the element of disorder and confusion which has been driven hither from the upper region.” This seems to imply, not just the rather impersonal principle of disorder represented by the Receptacle of the *Timaeus*, but a positively disruptive force, which has (if the phrase quoted here can be taken at its face value) at some stage itself broken away, or been expelled, from the intelligible realm. We seem thus once again, as in the case of the sublunary deity mentioned in the *De E*, to be brought close to a Gnostic thought-world; but in fact Plutarch can claim the authority of Plato in this matter, as indeed he does earlier in the essay (*De Is. et Os.* 360E). In *Laws* X, 896Dff., after all, Plato had postulated, in opposition to the beneficent World Soul, another “of the opposite capacity,” which is responsible for all irrational motion in the universe (898B) – or, to be specific, in the sublunar world, to which irrational motion is confined. Anything which is soul is also alive and self-moving, so this on the face of it would be a notable extrapolation from the inanimate disorderly principle of the *Timaeus* (which Plutarch, however, would precisely endow also with a disorderly soul, as we learn from his essay *On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus*, e.g. 1014B).

The question thus arises as to how far the degree of dualism manifesting itself in Plutarch goes beyond anything attributable to Plato himself (modern scholars, after all, tend to play down even the “maleficent” soul of *Laws* X, in asserting Plato’s fundamental monism). It does seem, indeed, as if Plutarch, through whatever intermediary, has been to some extent affected by dualistic influences emanating from Persia. At *De Is. et Os.* 369E, at any rate, he bestows high praise on Zoroastrian theology, referring to it as “the opinion of the wisest men.” Just before this, however, he sets out his own view, employing, as was so popular in his time, an appeal to immemorial antiquity. He claims to discern as inherent in Greek thought an understanding that the universe is administered, not just by one supreme divinity, but by “two opposite principles and two antithetic powers, one of which leads by a straight path and to the right, while the other turns us aside and bends backward,” and this causes both human life and nature in general to have a mixed character, experiencing both good and evil (369CD).

This constitutes a definitive statement of Plutarch’s dualism – an attitude he shares both with his follower Atticus and with the Neopythagorean Numenius, but which was

firmly rejected by Plotinus and all subsequent Neoplatonists. Plutarch held that the “maleficent soul” – which must be seen as a manifestation of the Indefinite Dyad – has, before God creates the cosmos proper (which thus has a temporal beginning), itself created a dim prefiguration of the cosmos, such as seems to be described in *Timaeus* 52Eff., and which in the *De Is. et Os.* is represented by “the elder Horus,” a being which is “brought into being crippled, in darkness” (369E). At 373C we find the statement that “before this world became manifest and was brought to completion by the Logos, Matter, being put to shame by Nature, brought forth from itself, imperfect, a first creation.” Plutarch here seems to be making creative use of the myth of Hera producing Hephaestus by herself out of spite, in response to Zeus’ generation of Athena from his head – Hera here representing the Dyad, as she does in the theology of Xenocrates.

It is this, as it were, anti-cosmos, in Plutarch’s view, that is set in order by God in the *Timaeus*. At this point, however, a more positive aspect of this dyadic entity may be observed. Back in 372E, after all, Isis is equated with the Receptacle of the *Timaeus* and with Matter, and even, at the outset of the essay (351EF), with Wisdom, and indeed seems to take on very much the same character as Sophia in the system of Philo of Alexandria, suggesting a tendency, in the Alexandrian Platonism from which Plutarch emanates, to identify Matter with the World Soul, and connect both of them with the Indefinite Dyad. This amalgam produces an entity which is on the one hand “fallen” and imperfect, but on the other hand filled with longing for the perfection emanating from the Logos, and thus constituting the instrumental cause of our creation and the vehicle by which we can come to know God.

There is present, then, in Plutarch’s thought, alongside the more adversative Dyadic, “Typhonic” figure, a World Soul which, while essentially irrational, is thoroughly amenable to being brought to order, though never in such a way that its residual irrationality is altogether done away with. In this connection, there is an intriguing passage in *On the Creation of the Soul in the Timaeus* (1026E–1027A), where we find a description of “the nature which presides over the heavens,” which may be taken as the Logos, mingling with the (irrational) World Soul, in such a way as to be periodically overcome by it, and “dragged down into a forgetfulness of its proper role,” but then reasserting itself before it is too late. This picture borrows much of its imagery from the myth of Plato’s *Statesman*, but it is not clear how literally Plutarch intends us to take it; more probably it is a portrayal of a constant tension between rational and irrational forces in the universe.

What emerges, then, as Plutarch’s metaphysical scheme, in place of the more traditional Platonist triad of principles, God, Matter, and the Forms, is a system where two positive forces confront two (largely) negative ones: God (as the Monad or the Good) and his Logos (constituting the sum-total of the Forms) facing an Indefinite Dyad, as an unregenerately negative principle, and a Soul which, while remaining essentially irrational, is yet susceptible to ordering by the Logos, to produce an ordered, if imperfect, world. As such, Logos and Soul combine, as described in *Timaeus* 35A, on Plutarch’s reckoning, to produce both a rational World Soul, which rules over the physical world, and individual rational souls, which reproduce the tensions exhibited on the macrocosmic level, but which can attain to “likeness to God” by imposing rational order on their passionate, irrational parts, as discussed above in the section on Ethics.

Divisions of the Universe and Hierarchies of Being

Plutarch propounds a three-way division of the universe, set out in the *De fac.* (943 F), and based explicitly by him on a remarkable theory of Xenocrates (fr. 56 Heinze), postulating three *pykna* or “densities” of Matter, which blend respectively with fire, air, and water, to form the sun and stars, the moon, and lastly the earth and sublunar regions generally.

Plutarch, however, introduces this theory only incidentally, in the course of specifying the nature of the moon, and it is not quite clear how far he is claiming it for himself. More interesting still, from a philosophical point of view, is a four-level hierarchy of being which appears, like the distinction of types of soul, in the myth of the *De genio* (591B), which expands on the Xenocratean tripartite division of the universe by adding a further term on top, the Monad. It seems to deserve quotation, by reason of its oddness and complexity:

Four principles (*arkhai*) there are of all things: the first is of Life, the second is of Motion, the third of Generation (*genesis*), and the last is of Dissolution. The first is linked to the second by the Monad, at the Invisible, the second to third by Intellect at the Sun, the third to the fourth by Nature at the Moon. A Fate, daughter of Necessity, holds the keys and presides over each link: over the first, Atropos, over the second Clotho, and over the link at the Moon Lachesis. The turning-point of birth is at the Moon.

Such a passage must be approached with due caution, by reason of its mythological context, but the “Invisible” may perhaps be taken as the outer rim of heaven, to preserve the analogy, though it is a (perhaps intentionally) obscure term. “Nature” can be taken as synonymous with Soul, in its irrational aspect. In its firm separation of Intellect and Soul, which are connected with the Sun and Moon respectively, this scheme is in accord with the dialogue *On the Face on the Moon*. The three Fates also play analogous roles in both myths (cf. *De fac.* 945C).

What is new here is the level of “Life,” and the Monad which links it to the level of Motion. The fact that a supreme principle is called “Monad” does not in fact mean that it is not also to be accounted an intellect; but a distinction is nonetheless being made between it and *Nous* proper. This *Nous* must be the demiurgic Intellect, combining the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* with the rational aspect of the World Soul. The Monad must therefore be taken as a transcendent, self-contemplating Intellect, analogous, perhaps, to the Paternal Intellect in the scheme of the Neopythagorean Numenius. The introduction of *Zôé*, a life-principle, as apparently superior to the Monad is somewhat unexpected, but it may be that “Life” (a concept perhaps borrowed from the notable Platonic passage *Sophist* 248E, which was to have such an influence in later Platonism) is to be regarded rather as the salient characteristic of the realm of the Monad than an active principle in its own right. However that may be, we can discern here a sequence “Monad – Intellect – Soul (Nature)” that anticipates in an interesting way later (Neoplatonic) developments, but also relates to more or less contemporary Neopythagorean speculations.

Another oddity of this scheme, which may indicate that it is not after all to be taken entirely seriously, is the apparent distinguishing of the realms of “generation” and “dissolution,” which should both be inseparably characteristic of the sublunar realm.

Plutarch, however, wants to associate *genesis* more properly with the Moon, which is thus endowed with the role of generator, while the Earth is assigned that of corruptor. They both, however, cooperate to produce the realm of Nature.

In both myths, as we have seen, Intellect is connected with the Sun and Soul with the Moon, and a “double death” is envisaged for the individual, the soul (with intellect) leaving the body and taking up its abode in the region of the Moon, and the intellect then leaving the soul behind and rising to the level of the Sun. The reverse process also takes place, the Sun sowing intellects in the Moon, and the Moon sowing the now intelligized souls into bodies (*De fac.* 945BC). All this talk of “sowing” can be referred back to the description of the activities of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* 41–42, but it is plain that much scholastic elaboration has taken place over the centuries: the Demiurge is now the Sun, and the “Young Gods” the Moon; an essentially “solar” theology has taken over, which may itself owe much to the speculations of Xenocrates.

Daemonology

The more transcendent the supreme principle becomes, the more it stands in need of other beings to mediate between it and the material world, over which, in Platonism, it exercises providential care (*pronoia*). We have seen above how the Logos serves this function for Plutarch, but, like all later Platonists, he also postulates a daemonic level of being, which figures prominently in his writings.

It is plain that here, as in various other areas of his philosophy, Plutarch is influenced by Xenocrates. In the essay *On the Disappearance of Oracles* (416Cff.), we find a doctrine of daemons put into the mouth of Cleombrotus of Sparta that owes much to Xenocrates, who seems to have drawn on the key passage of Plato’s *Symposium* (202E), but elaborated on the doctrine of the mediating role of daemons by propounding an analogy with the three kinds of triangle: the gods are to be compared to the equilateral, men to the scalene, and daemons to the isosceles. This is because the daemons “possess human emotion and divine power.” They are also to be linked in particular with the Moon, and are essential to the coherence of the universe, a link between God and men. Both God’s providential care and his transcendence must be preserved, and the universe can tolerate no sharp divisions or sudden transitions. The Moon, which served in the myth of the *De fac.* as the place of souls, and indeed as the symbol of the World Soul, is now established as the proper abode of daemons (who are, after all, souls of a kind). In either case, the sphere of the Moon is the essential arena of mediation and transition in the economy of Plutarch’s universe.

In the *De def. or.*, the chief subject of discussion is the administration by the daemons of oracles, but they are to be credited in fact with all active interventions of the supernatural in human life which had been attributed in popular belief to gods. Daemons are subject to passions, and thus can on occasion become degenerate. At *De fac.* 944C, we are told that, if daemons misuse their role as mediators as a result of being overcome by one passion or another, they are punished by being condemned to incarnation as humans. Such a concept, inspired ultimately, we may suppose, by the self-revelations of Empedocles as a fallen daemon (referred to at *De Is. et Os.* 361C), may or may not be intended as an explanation for *all* incarnations, but in any case it introduces an interesting “dynamic” aspect into Plutarch’s theory of daemons.

There are, then, “evil” daemons in Plutarch’s system, but not, arguably, *primally* evil ones, as in Zoroastrian or Gnostic systems. Such evil daemons as there are, it would seem, are fallen from a “good” state, and may again be promoted to that state. In such passages as *De Is. et Os.* 360Dff. and *De fac.* 945B, such beings as Typhon, and the Giants and Titans, which would generally be regarded as primevally evil beings, are portrayed as fallen souls which are filled with passions and destitute of intellect, but even they, Plutarch declares, “in time the Moon takes back to herself and reduces to order” (ibid.). Admittedly, at *De Is. et Os.* 361B, Xenocrates is quoted as an authority for the view that there are “great and strong natures in the atmosphere, ill-conditioned and morose, who rejoice in such (viz. gloomy sacrifices and obscene ceremonies) and after gaining them as their lot, turn to nothing worse.” But while Xenocrates may have regarded these beings as having a permanent status in the cosmos, Plutarch can accommodate them into his “dynamic” system. There will always be such malevolent beings, but they will not always be the same ones.

Apart from such “evil” beings, there are daemons who are delegated by God to punish us. Plutarch speaks at *De def. or.* 417B of those “who go about as avengers of arrogant and grievous cases of injustice,” a concept which goes back at least to Hesiod (*Works and Days* 254–255). Such daemons will, of course, be ranked among the good, even if their actions result in unpleasantness for some, and if they exceed their commission in any way they will themselves be punished and demoted. In this connection, Plutarch makes the interesting remark that “as among men, so also among daemons, there are different degrees of virtue, and in some there is a weak and dim reminder of the passionate and irrational element, a kind of dregs, as it were, while in others this is extensive and hard to stifle” (ibid.). Here, differences in degree of purification are recognized among the daemons, but nothing that makes any of them totally evil.

Above all, as has been remarked, Plutarch’s theory of daemons seems to be dynamic rather than static. He envisages a continual process of promotion and demotion of souls to and from a daemoniac state, and even, it would seem from such a passage as *De def. or.* 415B, the promotion in rare cases of human souls to divine status. This theory is there attributed to certain anonymous authorities (probably Pythagorean), rather than stated directly by Plutarch’s spokesman (his brother Lamprias), but there is no reason to suppose that Plutarch does not endorse it:

“Others (viz., Homer and Hesiod) postulate a transmutation for bodies and souls alike; even as water is seen to be generated from earth, air from water, and fire from air, as their substance is borne upward, even so the better souls obtain their transmutation from men into heroes and from heroes into daemons. And from daemons yet a few souls, in the long reach of time, because of supreme excellence, come, after being purified, to share completely in divinity (*theiotês*). But with some of these souls it comes to pass that they do not maintain control over themselves, but yield to temptation and are again clothed with mortal bodies, and have a dim and darkened life, like mist or vapor.”

So even the attaining of divine status on the part of souls cannot be taken as permanent. There is a continuous process of transmutation, as with the four elements. We may note in this connection that heroes have been introduced here as a second intermediate class between gods and humans. Hesiod is appealed to as an authority for this just above, but

the stimulus for the doctrine in Plutarch seems to be a parallel with the system of two means between the extremes of earth and fire in *Timaeus* (though this four-level system is recognized already by Posidonius, who wrote a treatise *On Heroes and Daemons*).

It remains to speak of the personal or guardian daemon, the most notable example of which, for later Platonists, was the daemoniac voice by which Socrates claimed to be guided. We have already seen that, in the myth of the dialogue *De genio* 591Dff., we find a description of the *nous* as a daemon. A little further on, however, at 593Dff., the doctrine is propounded that, while the gods themselves take over the guidance of a favored few, such as Socrates, the rest of human beings are presided over by a class of disembodied souls. These are certainly distinct from any part of the individual's *psyche* or *nous*. The passage suggests that, while every individual has a guardian daemon allotted to him, the daemon can only take an active part in the guidance of an individual when he is already far advanced in the process of escaping from the cycle of rebirth. The implications of this are not quite clear, but somewhat disquieting. Disquieting too is a doctrine adumbrated at *De tranquillitate animi* 474BC, that we possess not one, but two guardian daemons, one good and one evil (Empedocles [fr. 122 DK] being claimed as an authority for this), either of which one might follow. It is not clear, however, how far Plutarch is personifying the *daimones* that he talks of. He refers to them just below as *pathê*, which suggests that he is thinking of them only as tendencies rather than as spirits, but this in itself points up the ambiguity of the word *daimôn*, which can be understood as "daemon" or simply "fate" (Empedocles himself speaks of *moirai*). Comparison with passages such as *Corpus Hermeticum* IX 3, however, or Philo, *Questions on Exodus* I 23, suggest that the concept of an evil genius was circulating in at least the lower reaches of contemporary Platonism, and Plutarch may be picking up on it. There is not much warrant for such a doctrine in Plato himself.

Contact of the Immaterial with the Material

In connection with theory of the guardian daemon, and with the topic of modes of divine inspiration in general, Plutarch indulges in some speculation about the mode of contact between the daemoniac and the human intellect, and between the intellect or soul and the body. This is a subject which does not seem to have much bothered Plato himself, and perhaps only became acute as a result of the challenge of Stoic materialism. Plutarch addresses the subject at *De genio* 588F–589B. He cannot be said to probe very deeply into the difficulties associated with the concept, but at least he raises them. He compares the soul (borrowing a thought from Plato, *Laws* I 645AB) to a stringed instrument, the strings of which can be played upon by the intellect, and which, taut and sensitive as they are, reach down into the body and stimulate "the inert and prostrate mass" of flesh to action. He never here goes beyond this Pythagorean-inspired musical imagery in his attempt to explain the phenomenon, but we may note his use in the passage of a distinctively Stoic term for "coordinated tension" (*symentasis*, cf. *SVF* II 233), though in a markedly non-Stoic context.

Once Plutarch has settled to his satisfaction the problem of the interaction between soul and body, the rest is easy. Spirit can communicate with spirit by the lightest touch, "like light producing a reflection" (589B). Daemons do not need language to communicate

their thoughts to one another, and they can do the same to the intellects of persons who are suitably attuned to them, even as the air conforms itself to the sounds of articulate language (589C). Such individuals, like Socrates, are truly “daemonic.” We have here presented to us a theory of divine inspiration, grounded on a “scientific” basis, through an application of the theory of cosmic sympathy.

3. Logic

Plutarch is not in his extant works primarily concerned with logical questions, but indications of his position in this area of philosophy do obtrude themselves from time to time. We know from the Catalogue of Lamprias of a number of more properly logical works: *A Lecture on the Ten Categories* (no. 192), *On Tautology* (no. 162), and another explicitly directed against the Stoics (as one would expect from his general stance): *A Reply to Chrysippus on the First Consequent* (no. 152). Apart, however, from this anti-Stoic element, these titles do not tell us very much.

However, that Plutarch regarded Plato as being already in full possession of the “Aristotelian” categories is shown by a passage in the *Proc. An.* (1023E), which is a commentary on *Timaeus* 37ab, a passage in which, with the eye of faith, most of the Aristotelian categories could be discerned. Skeptics might object to such efforts as the equating of the judging by the soul of identity and difference, at 37a7–b1, with a recognition of Quantity and Quality, and the equating of a thing’s *existence* in a certain state with its *activity*. But a loyal Platonist could argue that, after all, any distinguishing of one thing from other things must involve an estimate of its quantity and quality, and that, on the basis of Plato’s own doctrine as laid down in the *Sophist* (248c), existence implies the characteristic of acting and being acted upon; and so on with the others. The Aristotelian categories are thus “demonstrated” to have been perfectly familiar to Plato, even if he did not see fit to set them out anywhere in as direct a manner as did his pupil later.

In another passage, in the polemical treatise *Against Colotes* (1115DE), Plutarch appears to identify Plato’s discussion of not-being as “otherness” in the *Sophist* (255a–258e, esp. 257b) as providing a stimulus both to Aristotelian and Stoic logic. Aristotle and the Stoics, the argument seems to run, seized on the concepts of “not-being” and “otherness” discussed in the *Sophist*, divested them of their metaphysical implications, and founded purely logical systems upon them. Plutarch seems to understand this passage of the *Sophist* as somehow involving the participation of particulars in Forms, although to us no sign of this appears in the text. For us, any participation (*methexis*) involved is that of one Form in another. It seems rather as if Plutarch is viewing the passage from a Xenocratean perspective, seeing in the discussion of “not-being” and “otherness” a description of the interaction of the Indefinite Dyad and the Monad, and the resulting creation of the sensible world.

Finally, we may note a passage of the essay *On the E at Delphi* (386E–387A) – put into the mouth of Plutarch’s friend Theon, but not repudiated by Plutarch himself – in which, in connection with the praise of the syllable *ei*, we find an acceptance of the characteristically Stoic form of the syllogism as part of the foundations of a logical system, which would seem to indicate that Plutarch, like many later Platonists – despite his overall tendency to oppose the Stoics – is prepared to accept the forms of Stoic as well of Aristotelian logic as part of the Platonist heritage.

4. Conclusion

When one considers Plutarch in the context of the Platonist tradition, it becomes easier to see which aspects of his doctrine are traditional, and which are peculiar to himself – or at least outside the mainstream of the tradition. In the sphere of ethics, as we have seen, he adheres to the more Peripateticizing stance of Antiochus of Ascalon, as opposed to what we may suspect to be the “austerer,” Stoicizing and Pythagoreanizing position of such a figure as Eudorus of Alexandria; while, on the position of the *telos*, or “end of goods,” he, like all Platonists after him, adopts Eudorus’ formulation of “Likeness to God” over the more Stoicizing formula of Antiochus, “Conformity with Nature.”

In the area of metaphysics, his adoption of the first principles of Monad and Indefinite Dyad is traditional enough, but his psychology, and in particular his doctrine that the individual soul is *in its essence* irrational, though amenable to being rationalized by intellect, and his postulation of a pre-cosmic irrational World Soul, together with his doctrine of a “separable” intellect, reveals much that is distinctive, and distinctively dualist – despite his determination to father his dualism on Plato himself. Finally, in the sphere of logic, he bears witness to the synthesis of Aristotelian and Stoic logic that had been generally adopted by Platonists in his day. There can be little doubt, however, that in his own mind Plutarch remained an “orthodox” Platonist.

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CHAPTER 5

Plutarch, Aristotle, and the Peripatetics

Francesco Becchi

The study of the interrelationship between Plutarch and Aristotelianism has not yet received the attention from scholars that has been devoted to other currents of thought. This includes both those traditions Plutarch was acquainted with and approved, and those he polemicized against. While studies and monographs have recently been dedicated to Plutarch's Platonism as well as to his anti-Stoicism and anti-Epicureanism, his Aristotelianism, by contrast, has not been given a similar treatment. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, publications by authoritative scholars (Dyroff, Rabbow, Heylbut, Brokate, Pohlenz, Ringeltaube) were also not lacking, dedicated to the age-old questions of sources including the Aristotelian-Peripatetic sources used by Plutarch (Andronicus of Rhodes, Sotion, Hieronymus of Rhodes, Ariston of Ceos, etc.). In the second half of the twentieth century, however, studies by Erbse, Pinnoy, Verbeke, Etheridge, Babut, Moraux, Donini, and the present author were dedicated primarily to the Aristotelianism of one of Plutarch's theoretical treatises on ethics, *De virtute morali*, which represents a chapter by itself among the works of the *Moralia*. We must therefore note the absence of a comprehensive study on this topic.

Yet today, more so than in the past, there is almost general agreement among scholars not only in admitting Plutarch's familiarity with Aristotle's writings, and in particular the *Ethics*, but also in recognizing the influence of the Aristotelian-Peripatetic tradition, though not exclusively, on Plutarchan psychology and ethics: together they constitute the focal point of his philosophy and are characterized by an attempt to combine the psychological and ethical doctrine of the ancients (the Academy and Peripatetic school) with the intellectualism and cognitive-rational therapeutic method of the Stoics. Resonances and precise conceptual coincidences, while not formal, with the ethical writings of Aristotle were already noted in the first half of the twentieth century. These observations led to the formulation of the unlikely, though widely accepted, hypothesis that Plutarch had recourse to an intermediary source.

In addition, while unequivocal evidence demonstrating a direct use of Aristotelian texts is lacking, Plutarch – as evinced also by the *Index* compiled by O’Neil (2004) – nevertheless demonstrates a developed knowledge of the writings of Aristotle as well as those of his successor in the Lyceum, Theophrastus, *elegantissimus omnium philosophorum et eruditissimus* (“the most elegant and erudite of all philosophers”) (Cic. *Tusc.* 5.9.24).

However, it would constitute an historical error to evaluate Plutarch’s Aristotelianism solely on the basis of Aristotle’s writings without taking account of the nearly half a millennium of evolution undergone by Greek culture, and it would be a methodological error to persist in that sterile tendency – particularly prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth – that sought to identify, based on the most general but least significant coincidences, the philosophical sources that Plutarch would have obtained for the composition of his treatises. It has been widely demonstrated that Plutarch’s Aristotelianism mirrors the tendencies and philosophical disputes of the time, and reflects an Aristotelianism that is very nearly contemporaneous with the appearance of the first commentaries on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. In these commentaries significance derives not so much from coincidence with as divergence from Aristotle’s writings.

Therefore, we must avoid the vicious circle of undertaking continuous and direct comparisons with Aristotle’s *Ethics*, as if nothing had happened in the development of philosophical thought between Aristotle and Plutarch. The Aristotelianism that characterizes Plutarchan psychology and ethics is a “functional” and “practical” Aristotelianism: functional, because it deals with doctrine that is Aristotelian in origin, and does not correspond precisely to Aristotle’s *Ethics*, inasmuch as it has undergone modifications and adaptations in response to various polemical attacks of Stoic provenance and is therefore unrelated to Aristotle himself; and practical, because knowledge and education are necessary if one wants to live honestly and happily (*Demetr.* 1.4). If in fact nature, being precise and resourceful, recognizing neither defect nor excess (*Am. prol.* 495C), does not produce any character integrally good or undeniably transported to virtue (*Cim.* 2.5), and if, as Plato says (*Resp.* 6.491d–492a), great natures produce alongside great virtues great vices, then moderation and mildness in character as well as in action are the gifts of reason and education. In reason and education, above all, resides the virtue of the political man manifested in actions (*Cor.* 15.4), because reason teaches one not just to seem to be virtuous, but actually to be virtuous in one’s private and public life (*Ad princ. inerud.* 782A). For Plutarch, the greater advantage that men can receive from the benevolence of the Muses is that of the natural refinement of one’s nature through reason and education: it is in fact thanks to education that one’s character acquires moderation and avoids excess (*Cor.* 1.5; *Mar.* 2.3–4).

1. Philosophical *Paideia*

Plutarch lived in a period characterized by a profound moral crisis, in which not only wise and sensible men ceased to represent worthy behavioral models, but also those who professed to be philosophers seemed more concerned to appear to be virtuous rather than not to be virtuous. He located the profound cause of this crisis in ignorance and error, as a consequence of which passions arise in the soul that are unworthy of or

disgraceful for man. Plutarch represents a qualified point of reference on the ethical level through the reaffirmation of the unity constitutive of man, a subject discussed by Epicurean materialism on one hand, and by Chrysippean-Stoic panlogism on the other. He reveals himself to be a profound authority on human nature and the human spirit, its weakness as well as its greatness, and he knows that on account of the weakness and fragility of his nature (*Cleom.* 16.8), man, to the extent that he is led to virtue, is incapable of reaching the good with only his natural good disposition and of securing for himself, in the midst of changing events, a self-sufficient life, immunity from pain, and tranquility of the spirit, which represent the sources of happiness in life (*De virt. et vit.* 101BD). The lessons of history have also shown him on one hand the difficulty of finding a man whose life is irreproachable and pure, and on the other have indicated to him the possibility of harmoniously reconciling human passions and behavior that require tightening and release, as if they were the strings and sounds of the soul.

Plutarch thus demonstrates that he knows that natural ability, being truly noble and good, without education gives rise to many unworthy actions commingled with others that are of a more elevated nature, as occurs in agriculture when fruit is generated spontaneously without cultivation, or in the case of a wild field that remains uncultivated (*Arat.* 10.5; *Cor.* 1.3). Precisely because nature produces virtue without science, Plutarch is convinced that some anomalies and inconsistencies of character are not indications of actual wickedness but should be considered instead manifestations of a lack of philosophical training (*Cim.* 2.4–5; *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 1.4; *Arat.* 10.5; *Cor.* 1.3) and ignorance that allow empty opinions and false judgments to infiltrate from the outside and are capable of turning a healthy emotion into a passion that is foul and unworthy of man. Thus human nature, which easily allows itself to be conditioned and perverted by social catechesis (*Am. prol.* 493CD) and by everything of external provenance (*Brut. an.* 989C), must be supported by a perfect virtue, based on reason and education (*Sert.* 10.6; *Cor.* 1.3).

Plutarch thus signals a return to the method of the ancients. With regard to ethics, he takes his place in a continuous line that extends from Pythagoras, through Plato and Aristotle, up to the philosophers of his own time. In order to educate the contemporary aristocracy – which admires the virtues of great characters of history but is not able to imitate them on account of the weakness of the soul due to ignorance (*apaideusia/agnoia*) – he does not turn to sophistry, consisting of axioms and syllogisms, but to a philosophy that is the practice and art of life, and which, in the words of Seneca (*Ep.* 16.3), *non in verbis sed in rebus est* (“is not in words but in actions”). A philosophy that guides one towards virtue, and which therefore, as is also shown in the *Lives*, appears in the actions of those who have been educated, conferring on them, along with dignity and decorum, a certain measured proportion and harmony (*Dion* 1.4; *Cor.* 15.4; *Comp. Lyc.-Num.* 4.12). It deals with an education that is not based on dreams and illusions (*Aem.* 1.3), and does not model giants that externally resemble gods or heros, but internally are full of earth, stone, and lead (*Ad princ. inerud.* 779F–780A): it seeks to cure ignorance, communicate moderation, gentleness, justice, tranquility, and inspire a desire to act. Above all it is a philosophy that seeks to inspire fitting judgments that establish the appropriate measure of pleasure and pain and produce useful, beautiful ideals and greatness of character (*Cum princ. philos.* 776CD; *De exil.* 599D). This educational strategy, put into action by Plutarch in both the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, tends, together with reason and education, to cure maladies of the mind, preeminent among which are stupidity

and ignorance (*An corp. affect.* 500EF), and to civilize the *physis* of man, in cultivating moderation (*Cor.* 1.5, 15.4), in order to attain virtue (*Cum princ. philos.* 777C).

Training in philosophy therefore facilitates the primary task of consolidating and reinforcing men's judgment thanks to reason and eliminating weakness of the spirit (*astheneia/atonía*), which produces endless pain and fear in men who have not been prepared by reason to sustain the adversities of fate. Philosophers differ from the majority of men in that they possess strong and solid judgment, which they uphold even in life's adversities (*De Alex. fort.* 1.333BC; *Eum.* 9.2), when circumstances tend to disrupt rational thought and the imagination of imminent dangers overcomes judgment. The man who, in contrast, is deprived of moral instruction will inevitably succumb sooner or later to the ignorance that resides within him (*Ad princ. inerud.* 779F–780A).

Right reason within man is the absolute mistress (*Am. prol.* 493DE) and represents the best remedy for all circumstances of life. It is the only force available to man to avoid corruption by vice, the source of every passion (*Ad princ. inerud.* 782C), and by pathological emotions that arise externally through empty opinion due to ignorance of what is good and decent.

As evil does not reach man externally unless it is deeply rooted internally (*An vit. ad inf.* 499E), so human happiness does not come from without and does not depend on either *physis* or *tychē*. Wisdom is the only virtue considered capable of making life at once beautiful and peaceful. If a man does not manage to achieve serenity of mind and happiness, and behaves foolishly, in a manner akin to those sick or infirm individuals who are unable to withstand either heat or cold, he must not blame either nature or fortune but his own foolishness and insanity instead.

This *paideia* together with *physis* produces with reason a gradual improvement of character that is the wellspring of life and gives rise to beautiful actions, the outward manifestations of a correct interior disposition. For Plutarch, philosophy is not like sculpture, which models statues that rise immobile on a pedestal, as Pindar says; to everything it touches, philosophy communicates activity, efficacy, and vitality, in short, greatness of mind united with gentleness and simplicity (*Cum princ. philos.* 776C–777C). Plutarch's vision of philosophy therefore is founded on rationality and affect, which represents the motor of the soul and the principle of action, inasmuch as it allows virtue – the gift of reason and education and the greatest good that the gods have given to man – to be translated into action.

In his educational strategies, Plutarch pursues two objectives. On the one hand he seeks to transform, through gradual improvement of an individual's character and conduct of life (*Aem.* 1.3), the vices and mistakes that are linked to ignorance and foolishness into more moderate passions that are gradually extinguished (*De prof. virt.* 84A). On the other hand, he seeks to make passions the natural allies of reason, so that judgment, in accordance with the principles that inform morality, can generate ethical virtues that are the mean between defect and excess in regard to passions and actions (*De virt. mor.* 443C, 444C).

Confronted with vice and error – which are psychic illnesses (*nosēmata*) – Plutarch proposes the exercise or practice of impassiveness (*De prof. virt.* 83B, E), which is a great and divine ideal but not impossible for man (*Fab.* 10.2). Nevertheless, since it is not easy to free oneself from all vice (*Prae. ger. reip.* 800B; *De cur.* 515BD), Plutarch admits the

ideal of moderation and gentleness that signal satisfactory progress and a superior internal disposition (*De prof. virt.* 80BC), but which must not be confused, however, with the notion of ethical virtue.

Plutarch draws a clear distinction between pathological and dangerous passions that attach themselves to empty opinions and false judgments, and natural passions that are a necessary component of the human soul, although subject, by their nature, to excess and defect. Therefore, if it is true that all ailments of the soul are evil (*De cur.* 515BC), the same cannot be said for natural passions. Plutarch objects to the Stoic doctrine according to which each passion is an error (*De virt. mor.* 449D) and recognizes the existence of natural passions that it would be neither possible nor favorable to eliminate (*De virt. mor.* 443C) because, if they are moderate (*De virt. mor.* 451CD), they are indispensable for action and the development of ethical virtue (*De virt. mor.* 452C).

This ethical and political philosophy that, like a *technē* of life, desires to educate and teach people to act well and to achieve noble actions is focused on right reason (*phronēsis*), which in every action has the task of determining the correct measure and of producing in the mind a disposition capable of securing tranquility and self-sufficiency (*De virt. et vit.* 101D). Functionally it is an anti-Stoic doctrine, as the commentary of Aspasius on the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the writings of Alexander of Aphrodisias, the second Aristotle, readily demonstrate. It proposes to defend liberty, the intellectual and moral autonomy of man, the principle and cause of his own actions, and to indicate an ideal that, unlike the divine ideal of the Stoics or the bestial ideal of the Epicureans, results in one that is fit for man.

2. The Human Soul

Plutarch combines an analysis of morality and the conduct of life with that of the nature of the soul and its faculties and disorders. He starts from the part of the psychological doctrine of Plato, the tripartite division of the soul in Book 4 of the *Republic* and in the *Timaeus*, in order to arrive at the bipartite division of Aristotle, which reunited in a single irrational faculty the irascible part (*to thymoeides*) and the appetitive part (*to epithymētikon*). Aristotle's bipartite division arose functionally in the polemic against Chrysippus' intellectualistic monism. The existence in the soul of a faculty, qualitatively distinct from reason and naturally subordinate to it, is the necessary precondition for the admission of two different types of virtue, theoretical and ethical, one speculative and the other practical, that have passion as a subject and reason as a form: "[*sc.* Aristotle] made abundant use, as is evident in his writings, of the Platonic tripartite division, he then united the irascible element with the appetitive one, considering anger a sort of appetite and desire for vengeance" (*De virt. mor.* 440D, 442B). In fact, in both psychology and ethics, Aristotle represents for Plutarch the successor to Plato who opens to all the pathways of science (*Nic.* 23.5). Furthermore, Aristotle appears to him as the perfecter, in an anthropological sense, of Platonic doctrine, by virtue of the specificity that he accords the study of human passions and virtues (*Arist. Eth. Nic.* 1102a 13–15: "it is evident that we must examine *human* virtue, because we intend to study *human* goodness and *human* happiness"), and to the possibility that man needs not only to attain dominance over his passions but also to use them as a vehicle for reason (*De virt. mor.* 452C). The formulation of the irrational

dual nature of the soul with a distinction between the vegetative element, deaf to the voice of reason, and the passionate and irrational element (*pathetikon kai alogon*) which, while devoid of its own reason, participates in some way in the reason of the rational element (*De virt. mor.* 442BC), can only be defined as Aristotelian and Peripatetic. It finds precise correspondences not only in the *Ethics* of Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1102b11ff.; *Eth. Eud.* 1219b 28–31: “since we are investigating human virtue, let us establish that there are two parts of the soul that participate in reason, but both do not do so in the same way, instead one is made to command, the other to obey and to listen”), but also in a later Peripatetic contemporary of Plutarch such as Aspasius, author of the first commentary on the *Nichomachean Ethics* that has survived (Asp. in *EN* 18.4–8; 35.16–20 H).

Nevertheless, the rational superiority of man – wherein reason, thanks to its capacity to formulate judgments, is the absolute master (*Am. prol.* 493DE; *De soll.* 962C) – is the cause not only of his intellectual superiority but also of his ethical inferiority with respect to animals, regarding which Plutarch, like Theophrastus (fr. 531 FHS&G), demonstrates great sensitivity. In fact, even if animals do not possess the versatility, excellence, and full autonomy of human reason, nevertheless, inaccessible as they are to emotions of external origin (*Brut. an.* 989C: *pathē epeisakta*), they are not equipped with a mind filled with empty and absurd opinions (*Brut. an.* 986E) and consequently represent a model of behavior for man, whom unhealthy passions have instead distanced from nature (*Am. prol.* 497D: *nosēmata kai pathē*).

3. Reason

The distinction between absolute and relative reality determines for both Plutarch and Aristotle a division of reason that assumes a scientific and theoretical character (*theōrētikos logos*) when it is directed towards absolute reality and a deliberative and practical character (*praktikos logos*) when it turns to human reality. Therefore the difference that intervenes between knowledge (*sophia*) and wisdom (*phronēsis*) depends on the difference of the field of application, the theoretical realm for one and the practical for the other. The theoretical intellect that applies itself to primary and fixed realities, whose nature is immutable, abstains from deliberation, while the practical intellect, in having to descend to a reality full of errors and apply itself to constantly changing human action, is forced to resort to deliberation. If Plutarch assigns the most divine results of science to the theoretical intellect, he entrusts to right reason the philosophical practice of the soul which is manifested in an alleviation of the disorders of the mind and an improvement in character, which can be defined as moral progress (*De virt. mor.* 443E–444D).

Plutarch’s attention is directed mainly to practical reason, which is responsible, insofar as reason is correct (*De prof. virt.* 82 F), for the task of judging what is honest, just, and useful as well as their opposites (*Demetr.* 1.4), and of translating judgments into actions, by determining the necessary conditions for the enactment of judgments and ensuring that speech does not remain just speech, but instead becomes actions (*De prof. virt.* 84AB). Since complete impassiveness (*apatheia*) is a grand and divine thing (*De prof. virt.* 83E; *Publ.* 6.5), practical reason primarily has the task of regulating and ordering the passionate faculty of the soul, thus engendering a better and more perfect inner

disposition and eliminating the violence and intense episodes of passion with an incision from above and toward the midpoint of just moderation (*De prof. virt.* 84A; *De virt. mor.* 444EF).

4. Passion

Reason and passion constitute for Plutarch the necessary conditions not only for ethical action but also for civil and political action. This stance determines his distance on the one hand from those like the Stoics who reduce the passions to processes of reason, as if all desires and fits of anger were judgments, and, on the other, from those who, like the Epicureans, disqualify the excellence of virtue, reducing it to a phenomenon of a passionate nature.

Passions represented a crucial junction for an intellectual like Plutarch, who lived in a century of profound moral crisis in which virtuous men became bywords for monsters (*An virt. doc.* 439AB) and in which society – and particularly the rich and selfish aristocracy – appeared to be dominated by the worst illness of the mind, foolishness, which vice, without being cured, resides with the majority of people and lives and dies with them (*An corp. affect.* 500EF). Plutarch agrees with intellectuals of his time, such as Galen and Lucian, in denouncing ignorance (*agnoia*) and foolishness (*amathia*), which make vice incurable, as the primary and most serious maladies of the mind afflicting men of his time, because they affect the mind and render it incapable of formulating a judgment of the evils from which it suffers inasmuch as, being ill, it is the same organ that formulates the judgment (*An corp. affect.* 500E).

Passions like insatiability (*aplēstia*), greed (*pleonexia*), anger (*orgē/thymos*), affliction (*lypē*) – a vice that appears terrible to everyone because it breaks the spirit and fills it with pain in the same way that hard work batters the body (*De exil.* 600D) – yearning for riches (*philochrēmata*) or for glory (*philotimia/philodoxia*), and the desire to excel and dominate are maladies born out of weakness of the mind and generate passions that afflict contemporary society as well as many of the protagonists of the *Lives*.

The accusation that Plutarch primarily seems to direct at the men of his time is therefore that they are ruined and have filled their minds with false and absurd opinions (*Brut. an.* 986E). As a result of this mental poverty (*De cup.* 524E) due to the distortion of reason, they formulate false and irrational judgments, cohabitating with vice and thus indicating a departure from nature (*Am. prol.* 497D). Afterwards habit (*De esu carn.* I 996B, II 996D), having become in some way nature of that which is opposed to nature (*De tuend. san.* 132A), is so deeply rooted that it proves impossible to be immune to error (*De esu carn.* II 996E). Apparently something happened to men of his time akin to what happens to oil when it loses its essence because of perfume manufacture (*Am. prol.* 493C): man, capable of being rational *par excellence*, seems to be transformed into an irrational being with a reduction of reason through passion, in a sense exactly opposite to that advocated by the Stoics. But Plutarch was well aware of how much truth there was in the Stoic doctrine of the perversion (*diastrophē*) of human nature, influenced by continuous social catechesis and exposed to the seductive power of representations (*phantasiai*) of external origin. He was also aware that reason, if it does not have the strength (*tonos*) to remain steadfast against external enticements, transforms these

representations into mental images. Yet he did not ever consider passions as perversions of reason and polemically dissociated himself from the Stoic dogma according to which every passion is a mistake (*De virt. mor.* 449D). Passion represents for Plutarch a phenomenon that by its nature is distinct from reason, convinced as he is that evil does not reach man from the outside, but that man has the greatest share of it within himself (*An corp. affect.* 500DE), because it is inevitable that there is evil inside himself that renders pitiful what happens externally (*An vit. ad inf.* 499EF).

But Plutarch makes a distinction between passions against nature that are not suitable for men who have good sense (*Per.* 39.2) and natural passions that are necessary for action, which justifies the presence of a double ideal in his writings. The first type are unhealthy passions of external origin (*epeisakta pathē*) that indicate lack of resilience (*atonia*) and weakness of the mind (*De cohib. ira* 456F) inasmuch as they depend on errors of the mind, which collects empty opinions (*Cons. uxor.* 609EF; *De exil.* 600E). The second type in contrast need to be tightened and relaxed with much harmony, as if they were sounds and chords of the soul (*Per.* 15.2), in order to be brought back by reason to just and irreprehensible measures (*De virt. mor.* 444F–445A; *De vit. pud.* 529DE). The first type of passions are vices and maladies (*nosēmata kai pathē*) of the mind determined by foolishness and ignorance, from which it would be good to free oneself; the others, in contrast, if moderate, constitute the principle of action (*An corp. affect.* 501CD) inasmuch as the passionate impulse allows the translation of judgments into works causing them to become actions (*De prof. virt.* 84B), thus generating on an irrational level the ethical virtues that are the mean between defect and excess. We admire the actions that derive from ethical virtues to a greater degree than we like to possess those virtues (*Per.* 2.3).

The interpretation in anti-Stoical polemics of the phenomenon of passion as an irrational or passionate movement with the precision that deals with a movement of irrational faculties of the soul (*An corp. affect.* 501CD) and not, as the Stoics would interpret it, as a movement contrary to right reason, is a doctrine that, as Aspasius testifies (*in EN* 44.20–24 H), dates back to the Peripatetic Andronicus. In addition, again directed polemically against the Stoics, the rehabilitation of the essential role played by passions is a characteristic theme of the Peripatetic school. Without the impulses generated by passions, the *logos* would be reduced to inactivity and virtue would remain a judgment of reason without being transformed into virtuous action (*De virt. mor.* 451DE).

5. Morality (*Ēthos*)

Ethics is none other than a treatment of morality which represents for Plutarch the true source of tranquility of mind (*euthymia*), because from it beautiful actions flow and inner joy flourishes (*De tranq. an.* 477AB). It is a quality of the irrational (*De virt. mor.* 443C: *poiōtēs tou alogou*) because it develops in the irrational faculty of the soul, and is capable of being shaped (*kosmeisthai*) by reason (*De virt. mor.* 440D, 449B=Asp. *in EN* 44.17–18 H). This definition of morality, which finds confirmation in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* (1220b5 ff.), was adopted, as Stobaeus also attests (II 38.11–13 W), by later Peripatetics like Aspasius (*in EN* 69.26 and 30 H), the anonymous commentator (*in EN* 123.4 H), and Alexander of Aphrodisias (*in De An.* II 175.9–10 ff. B) in order to underline the non-epistemological or hegemonic nature of

ethical or practical virtue that arises in the irrational faculty of the soul, with reference polemically to the Stoic doctrine of virtue as a science, professed by Chrysippus (*De virt. mor.* 441A=SVF III 255, 259), and to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* (*De virt. mor.* 443C).

6. Wisdom (*Phronēsis*)

Wisdom turns out to be one of the most original concepts of Greek culture. Already noted in the Homeric poems in the archaic form of *phronis* (Hom. *Od.* 3.244), until Aristotle's time it maintained a twofold meaning, intellectual on one hand and practical on the other, in contradistinction to other terms that came to be defined early on through specialization in one sector rather than in another. It makes its appearance as "practical wisdom" at the beginning of the fifth century if, as seems to be the case, Democritus had already developed a doctrine of *phronēsis* to which he also assigned the task of deliberating and acting well (DK 68 B 2, 119, 193). The practical character of *phronēsis* as a science of good and evil must have characterized Socrates' conception (Xen. *Mem.* 4.6, 7; Pl. *Prt.* 352cd), which seems to have made a virtue of it, thus laying the foundations for the Platonic doctrine according to which true virtue is not separated from wisdom (Pl. *Phd.* 66e: *alethēs aretē meta phronēseōs*). Also in Plato, if *phronēsis* does not renounce the direction and governing of human action, it does nevertheless maintain its epistemological nature as a guide to all virtues. But it is in Aristotle's *Ethics* that *phronēsis*, together with *sophia*, as a *dianoetic* virtue becomes practical reason and right rationality (*Eth. Nic.* 1144b 27–28), without which one does not possess ethical virtue.

Plutarch seems not to be unaware of the theoretical character of *phronēsis* (*De virt. mor.* 443E), to the extent that correctness of reasoning renders ethical virtue perfect (*De fort.* 97E). Nevertheless, he does not differ from the later Peripatetics who considered *phronēsis* the typical virtue of man inasmuch as this determines what one must and must not do (see Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* XXXVII.210.18–20 and 211.17 B; in *De An.* II.156.2–3 B). Plutarch makes of *phronēsis* virtue and practical reason (Plut. fr. 23 Sandbach) to which he assigns the task of determining moderation in passions as in actions. In conflict with the Stoic conception of *phronēsis* (SVF III 262) as the "science of good and bad," Plutarch on one hand stresses the practical character of *phronēsis*, which regulates the impulse of passion, thus eliminating the excess and dissonance of passion and generating, on the irrational level, ethical virtue, and, on the other hand, he underscores the "architectonic" or "hegemonic" role that it performs with regard to ethical virtues that are not the destruction or the nullification of passion but a moderation between excess and defect.

"Intelligence (*phronēsis*) is not gold or silver or repute or wealth or health or strength or beauty" but "it is the something which is able to make good use of all these, and something through whose agency each of these is made pleasant, noteworthy, and profitable" (*De fort.* 99F). It therefore represents for Plutarch the best and most perfect internal disposition of man (*De aud. poet.* 24D) and the most divine quality of the human mind (*De fort.* 99EF). As a guide and orderer of all the arts (*An virt. doc.* 440B) it is the most important and perfect art, which renders life at once most beautiful and pleasant (*De tranq. an.* 466F–467A), generating immunity from both passions (*apatheia*) and pain (*alypia*), internal equilibrium (*eustatheia*), trust in oneself (*tharraleotēs*), greatness of spirit (*megalphrosynē/megalopsychia*), and self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*).

7. Theoretical and Ethical Virtues

The distinction of virtues as theoretical and ethical is raised again by Plutarch on the one hand with regard to the universal categories of being that characterize the intelligible world and the sensible one, and on the other with regard to the binary division of the soul into the rational faculty and the irrational. Plutarch, like Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1139b 15–17), Aspasius (*in EN* 37.12–13 H), and Ps.-Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Quaest.* XXV 150. 23–27 B), admits only two theoretical virtues: *sophia*, the virtue of the speculative intellect, and *phronēsis*, the virtue of the practical intellect (*De virt. mor.* 443E).

Along with theoretical virtues that belong to the rational faculties of the soul, Plutarch acknowledges ethical or practical virtues that represent a quality of the illogical faculty of the soul. They require a correctness of reasoning that is the culmination of the logical nature. They represent the most perfect of all the arts and have the task of judging not only the honest and the useful, but also the repugnant, the unjust, and the harmful, i.e. they have the task of choosing what belongs to an individual and shunning what is external (*Demetr.* 1.3–4). Inasmuch as they consist in the enactment of whatever right reason decides, they are the gift of reason and education, and represent the greatest good that the gods have given to men, because there is no greater, more pleasing, or more divine good whose realization we love (*Sol.* 7.2; *Arist.* 6.5; *Per.* 1.3–4).

If the impulse of passion is necessary for the enactment of judgment so that the action turns out not only to be beautiful and just, but is also consciously done, then it imposes the demand that the judgment be steadfast and immutable with respect to what it sets in motion (*Tim.* 6.1–4). These virtues are not something fixed, because they are not “being” but “activity,” they are not “substance” but “function.” They resolve themselves in useful actions (*De prof. virt.* 84B; *Maxime cum princ.* 776C). They manifest themselves continuously in the works and conduct of everyday life (*An seni* 796CD). With their realization, they put us in a condition such that we admire these actions and desire to imitate their authors (*Per.* 2.2). This differs from the goods provided by fortune whose possession and use we desire. The virtuous individual, in fact, living with virtue through actions (*De prof. virt.* 80E), gives proof of being not only coherent with himself but superior to himself, while the evil individual, devoid of this identity, demonstrates his own inferiority.

The Plutarchan conception of virtue as a disposition of the coherent soul that is in agreement with itself through undergoing alternate experiences and trials and tribulations, i.e. as coherence and identity with its own story, ultimately conforms with the spirit of Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 1166a 12–14ff.) for which virtue is a psychic attitude based on an intelligent choice (*hexis proairetikē*).

The practice and exercise of virtue becomes for Plutarch, as for Aristotle and the Peripatetics, the same condition of happiness and of fullness of being because it is possible to ignite true joy in the mind only if reason serves as the basis for teaching us what is good and useful. It constitutes the most important and perfect art and represents the pinnacle of good reputation and every human aspiration (*De fort.* 99CD). Virtue, to the extent that it is correctness of reason and the culmination of the logical nature and disposition of the soul, agrees with itself (*Adul. amic.* 24D) and represents the crowning achievement of good reputation and of every human aspiration (*De prof. virt.* 82F), and constitutes the greatest and most pleasing good (*Sol.* 7.2), i.e. the best and most divine quality in us.

8. Virtue: The *Mesotēs* of the Passions

The Aristotelian-Peripatetic notion that more than any other seems to characterize Plutarchan ethics is represented by the ideal of *metriopatheia* as opposed to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*. If for Plutarch passion is not an impulse of reason or an error of the mind but rather a movement of the irrational faculty of the soul, it is nevertheless an oversimplification to say that Plutarch substitutes for Stoic *apatheia* Peripatetic *metriopatheia*, or that he adopts the Peripatetic doctrine of the “moderation of passions.” This is also the case because this term, which characterizes the academic tradition, is ultimately as extraneous to the Peripatetic school as it is to Plutarch.

Ethical virtue as a virtue of the passionate part of the soul which, truly deprived of its own reason, allows itself to be ordered and regulated by reason, is characterized by having passions as its subject and reason as its form (*De virt. mor.* 440D). It is not the destruction of passion that is natural to the human soul, something that in addition to being impossible would also ultimately be harmful, but it is symmetry and moderation of passions (*De virt. mor.* 443C, 444BC). Practical reason in fact, by regulating the passionate impulse, generates at the level of the irrational the ethical virtues that are the mean between excess and defect. Plutarch, whose anti-Stoical polemic approaches that of the Peripatetics, such as the anonymous commentator of the *Magna Moralia*, Aspasius, and Alexander of Aphrodisias, aims at presenting the ethical virtue as an action in conformity with reason. The cause and principle of this is man because, as the second Aristotle writes (*in De An.* 81.12–13 B), if virtue of the rational element is knowledge, that of the passionate element is action.

Plutarch agrees with the later Peripatetics not only in the definition of ethical virtue as equilibrium (*symmetria*) and moderation (*mesotēs*) of passion and action (Asp. *in EN* 1.5, 42.22, 44.18 H; [Alex. Aphr.] *Quaest.* XXV 149.22, 32 B), but also in the defense of the Aristotelian notion of virtue-*mesotēs* against an interpretation of Stoic derivation that tends to trivialize its excellence.

In short, it can be said that the definitions of the five ethical virtues (strength, generosity, leniency, temperance, justice) cited by Plutarch find correspondence in Aristotelian *Ethics*, in the pseudo-Aristotelian texts (*Magna Moralia*; *Virtues and Vices*), and in the later Peripatetics.

9. Freedom from Pain or Grief (*Alypia*)

Among the passions that penetrate the mind externally by way of empty opinion due to ignorance of what is good and dignified is affliction (*lypē*), a disorder that appears terrible to everyone and from which everyone attempts to free themselves, because it induces people to grieve continuously over everything (*De exil.* 599BC). It betrays a mental poverty (*De cup.* 524CD; *De tranq. an.* 468D) that transforms a natural sentiment which is pain into a disorder contrary to nature and without limits (*Cons. uxor.* 609EF; [*Cons. Ap.*] 102C). For Plutarch right reason represents the best remedy for affliction (*De tranq. an.* 465B, 476D; *De coh. ira* 463B) because it fosters the ability to view reality with open eyes, without creating fragile and delicate fantasies and indulging in empty

opinions (*De tranq. an.* 465AB; *De cup.* 523D; *De exil.* 603A). Contrary to those who proposed apathy (*apatheia*) or insensitivity (*analgēsia*) as an alternative solution to pain, Plutarch (*Cons. uxor.* 609D, 611A), like Aspasius (*in EN* 143.21–23; 30.11–12), indicates, with reference to *alypia*, that it is a sign of moderation (*praotēs*) and of greatness of intellect (*megalopsychia*), the steadfastness (*eustatheia*) that characterizes the mind of the wise man (*phronimos*).

10. Impassiveness (*Apatheia*)

Regarding the notion of *apatheia*, one notes in the writings of Plutarch the presence of two opposing and almost contradictory conceptions, which find their justification in the distinction between natural and unnatural passions: *apatheia* at times is presented as an elevated idea, though inaccessible to man; at other times it is condemned as an obstacle on the path to moral progress. Attempts are made to explain and justify the coexistence within his oeuvre of these two opposing conceptions by appealing to the anti-Stoicism of Plutarch, who would unite the two themes in distinguishing two different levels, the theoretical one of the theologian and the practical one of the moralist.

This explanation is unconvincing, either because in the *Moralia* (*De prof. virt.* 83B) Plutarch presents the moral life as an exercise aimed at the achievement of *apatheia*, or because he presents characters in the *Lives* who are distinguished not only for their *metriopatheia*, but also for their *apatheia*, proof of which they can provide; for example Brutus (*Publ.* 6.4–5; *Brut.* 1.2), who impassively witnessed the flogging and beheading of his children despite his character having achieved a perfect balance through philosophy; the dictator Fabius, whose behavior evidenced his inflexible nature, his magnanimity and courage, in which audacity accompanied prudence (*Fab.* 1.5–6), confirming the opinion of those philosophers who maintained that the honest and virtuous man did not suffer either insult or dishonor (*Fab.* 10.2). On the death of his son, Fabius bore the disgrace not as if he were made of stone or oak (see *Cons. uxor.* 608C), but as a sensible man and a good father with the greatest moderation (*Fab.* 24.6: *metriōtata*), a quality Pericles by contrast lacked at the death of Paralus, the last of his legitimate children; Phocion (36.2), when he was accused of treason and was condemned to death by the Athenians; Dion (32.1) who, through the philosophical teaching he had received in the Academy, had reached not only imperturbability but also control of passions, showing moderation; and Cato the Younger (1.3), whose inflexible and impassive character did not prevent him from displaying pain on the death of his brother, obeying the natural sentiment of affection (*Cat. Min.* 11.3–4) more than the iron impassivity of Stoic doctrine which pushes one towards insensitivity (*analgēsia*).

When dealing with *apatheia* Plutarch refers to the Academic ideal, which does not imply the uprooting of natural passions from the mind, but only of those unhealthy passions that distance man from his nature (*Am. prol.* 497D) and are the imaginary product of empty opinion and false judgment (*De superst.* 165BC). Only in theoretical writing directed polemically against the Stoics, the *De virtute morali* (452A), does Plutarch take a position against the harsh and inhumane Stoic ideal of *apatheia* which, apart from being impossible ([*Cons. Ap.*] 102D), would prove pernicious and harmful, because it would reduce men to insensitivity and deprive them of a necessary component for action.

This control of the passions, the fruit of reason and education, transforms the vices into more moderate passions, so that even if they are not a virtue – and there is no good either greater, or more pleasing, or more divine – they do nevertheless represent the sign of a better internal disposition. It is this that distinguishes the hero from the masses and is called moderation or equilibrium (*metriotēs* or *praotēs*), which is the sign of greatness of soul (*Art.* 12.1; *Pel.* 26.8; *Alex.* 4.8; *De Alex. fort.* II 338E, 339AB; *Cor.* 15.4; *Cat. Min.* 14.4; see Asp. in *EN* 30.12; 108.15, 27).

11. Freedom and Responsibility

Plutarch recognizes in fortune the capacity to influence the corruptible and perishable side of man and the so-called external or material goods, but he excludes the possibility that it is capable of influencing and affecting the conduct of life founded on rational choice, because virtue cannot be outraged (*Cleom.* 39.1), and man possesses a very effective remedy against changes of fortune. This, as he indicates, is reason that is capable both of rendering life very beautiful and pleasant, and of instilling in the mind internal equilibrium, tranquility, and serenity.

For Plutarch, therefore, it is a very small part of man that is exposed to the attacks of *tychē* (fortune), considering that he is the patron of the best part of himself, wherein reside the greatest goods as correct opinions and judgments that aim at the attainment of virtue. Plutarch does not allow that fortune can transform genuine virtue founded on reason into its opposite, even if he recognizes the power to alter and modify a virtuous character, above all when he is subjected to serious and undeserved disgrace. Fortune thus only strikes men who, not directly prepared by reason, follow perverse opinions, while for the wise man reason ensures an imperturbable and uncontaminated character that teaches him always to live pleasantly in every respect.

This defense of wisdom and of correct judgment maintained by Plutarch, even in the *De fortuna*, must be interpreted as a polemical reaction in a Peripatetic key (*Alex. Aphr. Fat.* 173.23ff. B; in *De An.* II 172.16ff.) against the Stoic doctrine (*De Stoic. rep.* XXIII 1045BC) which, far from eliminating chance, ultimately admits that everything in human life happens according to a natural and immutable connection of cause and effect, to which one can indifferently give the name of fate or chance. In reacting against this Stoic doctrine, Plutarch claims for man the possibility of deciding freely and of taking responsibility for one's own actions, thus maintaining, in the wake of the Peripatetic doctrine (Theophr., fr. L 50 Fortenbaugh), that if virtue exists, chance does not exist.

12. Happiness

With regard to the doctrine of *telos*, Plutarch also seems to distance himself from the ideal of assimilation to the divine (*homoïōsis theō*) that characterizes the philosophy of the first centuries of the Imperial Age. Aware of the distance that separates human nature from the divine, he interprets the ideal of “following god” in that of “obeying reason” (*De aud. poet.* 37D) and fixes the good of man in the exercise of wisdom that represents the best and most divine quality humans can possess (*De aud. poet.* 24D; *De virt. mor.* 450E),

which is capable of making life at the same time beautiful and peaceful (*De tranq. an.* 446F). The fount of happiness does not originate externally (*De virt. et vit.* 100C), but resides within us (*De aud. poet.* 37A; *De tranq. an.* 467A, 473B). Wisdom has, so to speak, subterranean roots (*An corp. affect.* 500E). It does not depend on the possession of external goods (*Sol.* 3.3, 27.6, 28.9) – the desire for which does not depend on any natural exigency (*Cat. Mai.* 18.4) but enters one under the impact of a false opinion – but proceeds from correct reasoning (*Cons. uxor.* 611A; *Demetr.* 1.4; *Tim.* 6.1–4), capable of producing adaptation to every form of life (*De virt. et vit.* 101CD; *De tranq. an.* 466D, 477F; *De exil.* 599DF). It requires the exercise of the greatest good, i.e. reason (*De tranq. an.* 465B), thanks to which man adds pleasure and joy to everything that surrounds him, drawing from his character as from a fountain (*De virt. et vit.* 100C). In fact happiness, which presupposes self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), i.e. liberty from every personal need of superfluous goods (*Cat. Mai.* 31.1–7), is insensitivity to pain (*De tranq. an.* 465A; *De cup.* 523D), greatness of mind (*De cup.* 523D), internal equilibrium (*Maxime cum princ.* 777C; *De cup.* 523D; *Cons. uxor.* 609C), and trust in oneself (*De virt. mor.* 443D; *De cup.* 523D).

Plutarch is aware that the evil of the century is due to the weakness of the mind that is the cause of false judgments and errors, and is so much more dangerous when accompanied by passion. In agreement with the Peripatetics, he locates the goodness of man in the activity of virtue of the rational part of the soul, contradicting the Stoic doctrine of Chrysippus (*De Stoic. rep.* XXVI 1046D = *SVF* III 53) who identified happiness with virtue and considered it sufficient for the procurement of happiness. For Plutarch, as for the Peripatetics, happiness that is not a possession but an exercise of virtue consists in action and nevertheless requires the presence of those goods without which the exercise of wisdom would not be possible. Therefore Plutarch, like Alexander of Aphrodisias (*in De An.* II, 159.15–168.20 B), polemicalizes against the Stoic thesis, illustrated by Cicero in the fifth book of the *Tusculan Disputations*, concerning the self-sufficiency of virtue for procuring happiness. Although he affirms that with virtue every path and type of life is without pain and is pleasing (*De virt. et vit.* 100D; *An vit. ad inf.* 499D), or that wisdom makes life very beautiful and very pleasant, he recognizes that external goods, although they are largely inferior to those of the soul, nevertheless contribute to true and complete happiness only if, with the help of reason, it has been placed on a solid foundation (*De virt. et vit.* 101B), otherwise they only end up making the passions of the soul insatiable (*De virt. et vit.* 101D; *Mar.* 46.4).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A comprehensive study on Plutarchan Aristotelianism is still lacking. In its absence I recommend reading the second volume of the monograph written by P. Moraux on Greek Aristotelianism (1984), and particularly the second book dealing with the Aristotelianism of non-Aristotelian philosophers (*Der Aristotelismus bei nicht-aristotelikern*). On later Aristotelianism, separated from Aristotle by more than half a millennium of evolution of Greek philosophical thought, and on the relationships that link him to Plutarch, I suggest my discussion on the first commentator of the *Nichomachean Ethics* (Becchi (1994)), and the introductions to my editions of *De virtute morali* and *De fortuna* (Becchi (1990a), (2010)), which show the features of Plutarchan Aristotelianism that I have called “functional” as it reacts to contemporary philosophical disputes that are extraneous to Aristotle.

CHAPTER 6

Plutarch and the Stoics

Jan Opsomer

Both doctrinally and with respect to the very concept of philosophy, Plutarch has a great deal in common with Stoicism. Just by looking at the titles of his works, however, one might think that the Chaeronean philosopher is utterly hostile to the Stoic school, since his oeuvre includes several works especially devoted to anti-Stoic polemics. This impression becomes even stronger upon examination of the Lamprias Catalogue, an ancient list that comprises most of the extant works plus several treatises that are no longer extant (some of which may be spurious, however; cf. Sandbach (1969) 8–29, items 59, 78, 148, 149 (?), 152, 154). Yet a closer look at his works reveals significant similarities. Plutarch's attitude towards this rival school can indeed be characterized as a mixture of respectful acknowledgment of its merits and condemnation of some of its key tenets.

This rather complex situation has misled some scholars of the past into thinking that Plutarch was secretly a Stoic of sorts (cf. Oakesmith (1902) XVII; Gréard (1880) 59) and even Michel Foucault went so far as to describe what he calls Plutarch's "technologies of the self" as Stoic in essence. As early as 1916, R.M. Jones in his monograph *The Platonism of Plutarch* (reprinted in Jones (1980)) left no doubt about Plutarch's allegiance. Recent scholarship has only confirmed Jones's judgment. It has moreover become clear that the label "eclectic"¹ is not very helpful, as it carries the misleading suggestion that Plutarch felt free to incorporate heterogeneous, and maybe even incompatible, elements into his body of thought, or that the various components were more or less on an equal footing. It was Plutarch's reputation as an eclectic that led some scholars to believe that Stoic ideas form an important part of Plutarch's philosophy.² In fact, however, Plutarch's thinking is deeply Platonic. He shows himself willing to incorporate foreign ideas and techniques only insofar as they agree with the fundamental ideas and practices of Platonism. When he integrates Stoic ideas he takes care to subordinate them to the encompassing Platonic framework.

This, however, is only a part of the explanation for the many similarities that exist with Stoicism. The affinity of Platonism and Stoicism has intricate historical roots. Both grew out of the same (philosophical) culture, and the founders of the Stoic school were moreover influenced by Plato's philosophy, maybe in some cases directly by reading his dialogues, but certainly by Platonic views that reached them through various intermediaries.³ Platonism and Stoicism were led by a common inspiration, as Plutarch was ready to admit, yet there were also significant differences, as he never tires of insisting. This is true not only for doctrines, but also for philosophical practices based on these doctrines. Plutarch's "technologies of the self," or rather the therapy of the soul, as it was commonly called, have an undeniably Platonic imprint. It is true that the Stoics had made the care of the self – modeled on the manner by which medical science cares for the body – central to their philosophical practice and had developed sophisticated techniques designed to heal the soul and make it better, yet they could claim no monopoly on this practice; they were not the only ones for whom philosophy had a practical orientation, nor did they invent the care of the soul. It is not unlikely that Plutarch could look back on a genuine Platonic tradition in this domain. In the many works in which he offers practical moral advice – meant to apply not just to individual cases but to standard situations in which one encounters typical modes of behavior – he emphasizes that the techniques used to cure the soul should be based on particular insights available to Platonists, and often ignored by Stoics. A case in point is Plutarch's use of cosmopolitan ideas along with other arguments favored by the Stoics in his short treatise *On Exile*: the work teems with Stoic *topoi*, but the central idea that what people are used to calling their fatherland is not their true fatherland does not receive the standard Stoic explanation – "the whole universe is our fatherland" – but is transformed by a typically Platonic twist, inspired by the *Timaeus*: we humans are not earthly but celestial plants, and our heads, where the sovereign part of the soul is located (and not in the heart, as Stoics believed), keep our bodies erect and turn us towards heaven (*De exil.* 600 F; cf. Pl. *Ti.* 90A; see also Opsomer (2002)). We will examine further evidence for Plutarch's Platonic care of the soul below.

Plutarch's many affinities with Stoicism made it all the more necessary for him to mark the difference between his own thinking and theirs. The similarities between the anti-Epicurean and the anti-Stoic tracts – in tone and in the use of polemical tactics – may elicit the impression that Plutarch's attitude to both schools is the same. From the other works, however, especially from the dialogues, a different picture emerges: whereas the main Epicurean tenets, especially their theology and ethics, are presented as contemptible, and Epicureans are shown to be unfit to engage in a serious philosophical discussion,⁴ Stoic views and individuals are more often treated with considerable respect and presented as providing a valuable contribution to the philosophical dialogue. They were privileged opponents (cf. Babut (1969a) 176–180).

Anyone who seriously wants to study Plutarch's attitude toward Stoicism and the Stoics cannot afford to bypass the work of Daniel Babut. A comprehensive magisterial monograph devoted to the problem appeared in 1969, to be followed in the same year by a commentary on *De virtute morali* – a crucial text for determining Plutarch's attitude toward the Stoics, as we shall see – and later by several original articles (Babut (1969a), (1969b)). The most important articles are collected in Babut (1994). At the end of his life Babut provided the new French edition of Plutarch's three anti-Stoic polemical tracts

with copious notes and introductions (Casevitz and Babut (2002), (2004)). The notes by Harold Cherniss to the Loeb edition of the same texts are another indispensable instrument (Cherniss (1976)). In 1992, Jackson Hershbell gave a balanced account of the issue, taking into account developments in scholarship on Hellenistic and Roman Stoicism (Hershbell (1992b)). The relations between the Stoic and Platonic traditions have been the subject of much recent work, which has led scholars to a greater appreciation of the complexity of the issue in general (various authors examine different aspects in Bonazzi and Helmig (2007)).

Babut argues conclusively that Plutarch was thoroughly familiar with Stoic philosophy and had first-hand knowledge of the major Stoic authors from different phases of the school's history. In the works with a dialogical setting he showcases himself as highly respectful of many (not all) Stoics, several of whom he presents as close friends. At the same time, there is a strong anti-Stoic undercurrent in many of his works. Several texts – and not just the expressly polemical works – appear to have the repudiation of Stoic views as their *raison d'être*. Moreover, Babut also in many cases refutes the idea that some works bear signs of a strong Stoic influence: this influence remains superficial and limited, and is almost invariably subordinated to the philosophy of Plato (cf. Babut (1969a) 19–270). Throughout Plutarch's works the Stoics remain his confirmed opponents, yet they are at the same time respected for it. Especially valuable is Babut's discussion of Plutarch's philosophical dialogues, which are also literary masterpieces. These dialogues typically involve a philosophical progression: Stoic views are presented usually in the earlier parts, and are criticized subsequently. Yet they often contain important truths to be integrated in the final, Platonic, account (cf. Babut (1994) 405–430, 457–504).

It was part of an inherited dialectical strategy (earlier examples can be found in Cicero) and in accordance with the self-image of Platonists to present their brand of philosophy as occupying the middle ground between extremes, most notably between Epicurean “atheism” and Stoic “pantheism” (the use of the term is anachronistic, but the idea is not), between the denial of providence and the view that it is almighty. By adapting this stance, Plutarch could portray himself in the role of the prudent, humble, and wise conservative who manages to avoid the extremes of schools that overly rely on their cleverness and arrogated knowledge to make hazardous speculations about god(s) and the universe. Whether by sharply criticizing his opponents or by suggesting that his own view, to be preferred for its balance and moderation, takes into account their concerns, Plutarch is wont to put himself in the position of the superior and trustworthy thinker. This strategy can therefore be regarded as a form of self-promotion by which the author postures as an authority-figure, intellectually but also socially. Recent work on Plutarch tends to emphasize this aspect of his personality (this is the merit of the outstanding monograph by Van Hoof (2010); see also König (2011), and already Swain (1996) 173, 179–183).

It is true that knowledge and power are often closely intertwined. Yet it would be a vast exaggeration to claim – as some theorists in their awe for Foucault do – that it would invariably be illicit to study philosophical ideas without looking at their relation to cultural power structures. Just as the history of philosophy is not eliminatively reducible to rhetoric, social and cultural contexts alone cannot account for why persons hold certain views. Intellectual traditions, philosophical argument, hermeneutics, and theoretical constraints linking various ideas across philosophical sub-domains are much

more important in accounting for the views of serious philosophers. And since we have all reason to believe that Plutarch was such a philosopher, I will now turn to his views on central Stoic doctrines, and examine the inner-philosophical developments and arguments that help to understand them. This is what most interests the historian of philosophy. The principle of charity, as I understand it, also demands that we assume, at least for the sake of a rational reconstruction of his views, that Plutarch advocated his views because he was convinced of their truth, and condemned incompatible views because he believed them to be false. (One could of course argue that his real reasons for believing certain views were opaque to him. Plutarch's psychological motives, however, are not accessible to us.)

1. Theology, Providence, and Evil

Plutarch is a deeply religious thinker; the nature of the divine as well as our relation to it are for him what philosophically matters most. To a very large extent, certainly from a modern perspective, his own views agree with Stoic teaching (cf. Dillon (2002) 224). Both Stoics and Platonists are firmly convinced that the world is the product of benevolent and intelligent divine causation, that it is governed by divine providence, that the gods exercise providence for our benefit (and not just *to* our benefit),⁵ and that we humans have a special relation to the divine. Like the Stoics, Plutarch even thinks that there is a spark of divinity in each of us, more specifically in the highest part or capacity of our souls: reason or intellect. The divinity watches over us, rewards our merit, and punishes our vices (this idea is central to *De sera numinis vindicta* but also figures in many other works, e.g. *De Stoic. rep.* 1050E). The Stoics, too, have inherited these ideas primarily from Plato.

The divine, for Plutarch, is plural. The Greek, but also the Roman and other traditions abound with divinities, stories, and rituals of all kinds. Yet Plutarch is also committed to the idea there is a single supreme god, who is the creator of the world and the first principle of providence, on which all other creative and providential powers depend (cf. *Quaest. Plat.* II, 1000E). This idea, too, is close to the Stoic doctrine of an active force in the world that can be called god, Zeus, providence, fate, or *logos* (for Stoic theology, see Mansfeld (1999); Frede and Laks (2002); Algra (2003)). Plutarch is moreover basically sympathetic toward the technique of allegorical interpretation, perfected by the Stoics, which allows incongruous mythological elements to be explained away (the sufferings and injustices of their protagonists, for instance) and various gods and demons to be subordinated to the supreme principle. But whereas the Stoics tend to regard those other divinities as mere aspects or manifestations of the activity of god, Plutarch is not willing to go that far. His interpretation of mythological stories is guided by the idea that one should not take everything literally, but should see how it fits with the idea of the venerable nature and the benevolent, caring role of the divine, in agreement with the general principles of morality (*De mul. vir.* 247 F; *De Is. et Os.* 358E–F, 374E; *De E* 388 F–389 C; *Amat.* 762 A; *De fac.* 942 D–E; *De Stoic. rep.* 1049 B, D–E; *Num.* 7; *De Daed. Plat.* = fr. 157–158 Sandbach). The divine, so Plutarch argues, is defined by perfect morality (cf. *De sup.* 167 E; *Ad princ. inerud.* 781 A; see also Van Nuffelen (2011) 161–162, 168; compare *SVF* III, Antipater fr. 34 (*De Stoic. rep.* 1052 A)). Plutarch nevertheless criticizes certain allegorizing interpretations, not explicitly attributed to the

Stoics but certainly in agreement with their practice: some over-sophisticated interpreters sometimes forget to look closely at the text (cf. *De aud. poet.* 19E–20B and 31D–E, with Babut (1969a) 375–376); at other times, for instance when they explain certain tales about gods as being in fact about exceptional human beings who were later divinized, they risk inflicting damage on ancient traditions, thus erring on the side of impiety (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 359D–360A, with Babut (1969a) 376–378, 383).⁶ These passages do not amount to a condemnation of a Stoic practice as such, but target certain aberrant exaggerations. Contrary to what is often thought, Plutarch does not condemn across the board all forms of physical allegorization, by which philosophers explain mythological narratives as referring to physical phenomena: he himself occasionally indulges in this type of allegorizing interpretation (cf. Babut (1969a) 379–388).

Despite this fundamental agreement in theological matters there are also significant differences, and Plutarch insists on them more than on the similarities. He objects above all to the Stoic idea of the divine *logos* as the single active cause pervading the entire universe. This view contains two basic mistakes: (1) If god pervades the universe, he is mixed up with, and contaminated by, matter (*De Pyth. or.* 400D; *Amat.* 764D–E; *Ad princ. inerud.* 781 F). That is unacceptable: one should not think that god is present in rains and stones, i.e. in inanimate nature (*De Is. et Os.* 369A, 377D). (2) If there is only one causal power that determines everything, it is impossible to explain evil: either one has to deny that there is evil – but that is not a very plausible position given the real existence of disease, war, human vice, and other bad things – or one has to make god responsible for evil, but that would be blasphemous. The Stoics try both lines of argument, but it is especially the second line that gets criticized by Plutarch, as it is inevitably impious.

The problem is aggravated by the doctrine that all events are determined by antecedent causes, which was perceived as amounting to a full-blown determinism (cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1056B–C). The whole universe constitutes one giant causal network, in which everything is thus determined. Every event in this network is completely determined. Ineluctable fate, which is another name for this causal principle, is moreover identified with god (Plutarch rejects the equation of Zeus with fate, made by Homer, in *De aud. poet.* 23C–24C). In other words, god is directly and causally responsible for every single event, including the bad ones. But this is not possible: if god is the author of all, so Plutarch claims, it is impossible for anything bad to happen (just as it is impossible for anything good to happen, if he is the author of nothing – the Epicurean position) (*De Is. et Os.* 369A–B).

To the doctrine of a monistic divine causation of all things Plutarch opposes dualism (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 369E–F, 373A–B; Mansfeld (1992) 278–290): it is necessary to posit a counter-force, a principle of evil, even if, as Plutarch hastens to add, both principles are not of the same rank: the predominance lies with the good (*De Is. et Os.* 369D, 371A). In his exegesis of the *Timaeus* Plutarch specifies that matter, which he, with the Stoics, regards as qualityless, cannot fulfill the role of a counter-principle. The source of evil is rather the irrational soul. Once the world has been created this soul is made subservient to the rational soul – just as is the case in human beings. But even so, the irrationality never completely disappears: evil, i.e. disorder, is ineradicable. The Stoics refuse to admit even a mitigated form of dualism, such as Plutarch's, and hence have no explanation for the existence of evil, so Plutarch claims. Although they are committed to the principle

that nothing comes about without a cause and do not concede to Epicurus “even the slightest swerve of the atom,” they are themselves forced to bring in evil “without cause and process of generation and out of the non-existing” or by an “incidental consequence” (*De an. procr.* 1015B–C). This, according to Plutarch, amounts to no explanation at all and implies a fundamental contradiction at the heart of the Stoic system.

This tendency to make god the author of everything, including bad things, can also be witnessed in their discussion of more particular issues, such as the seemingly unexplainable decline of the oracles. Whereas the Epicureans make god the cause of nothing – they deny divine providence and attribute the decline to blind natural causes – the Stoics again make him the cause of everything, including the decline, and then try to come up with all kinds of reasons that are meant to show that this is not something bad (*De def. or.* 420A–B). Once more, the Platonic approach steers a middle course between both extremes.⁷

2. Determinism and Moral Responsibility

Monolithic causal determinism has another undesirable consequence: it makes human responsibility null and void, so Plutarch thinks. In fact, the Stoics held a sophisticated view, which no Platonist ever managed to understand. This was due to incompatible, and insufficiently reflected upon, basic assumptions about the relation between moral responsibility and causal determinism. Platonists are incompatibilists: a choice cannot be up to us or free if it is at the same time fully determined by a chain or network of antecedent causes that lies (at least in part) outside of us. Freedom and also moral responsibility, they think, are only possible for agents that can make a true choice between alternatives, independently of any external causal factors impacting them. Stoics, on the contrary, were compatibilists. On this view, it is sufficient for a choice to be called “up to us” if the decision is “our own,” i.e. if it arises within us, if it proceeds from our character (i.e. from the governing part disposed in a specific way) as its principal and perfect cause, that is. The well-known cylinder analogy is meant to elucidate this idea: the push that sets the cylinder in motion comes from antecedent external causes, but the fact that it *rolls* is explained by its own shape. The fact that our souls are themselves part and parcel of the global causal network (hence the way they are disposed is itself ultimately caused by things external to them) does not detract from their freedom. Quite the contrary: if our souls and actions were *not* part of that network, they would be arbitrary, so a compatibilist would argue (for Stoic compatibilism, see Bobzien (1998)). What counts for the moral analysis is therefore the fact that we own our actions and decisions. That the disposition from which we act is itself the product of antecedent, partially external causes, is irrelevant. This theory is unacceptable and probably even unintelligible to Platonists. Plutarch accordingly requires that the choices made by humans not be necessitated by a chain or network of antecedent physical causes. Souls, according to Plutarch, should be held to be independent, spontaneous sources of causation. This is true for the world soul and for human souls. What is more, the ultimate source of this kind of spontaneous activity is what Plutarch calls the “soul itself,” i.e. the original psychic principle that is irrational and disordered before it receives order and rationality from god (*De an. procr.* 1014E). Its causality is not determined by bodily

causes, and the same is true for the composite soul. That is not to say that the soul's choices are arbitrary: they are embedded in a causal history, but one that is different from that of bodies. This justifies, in Plutarch's view, that the souls are held responsible for them, incur praise and blame, and will be rewarded or punished when their earthly life has come to an end.

3. The Soul

The very composition of the soul constitutes another point of conflict between Plutarch and the Stoics. There is a cosmological-ontological aspect to this, and an ethical one. Let us start with the first (for a more extensive account, see Opsomer (2004), (2012) 311–313). Plutarch holds the view that the world soul, in its cosmic state, and human souls, in their embodied state, consist of essentially two parts: the original and originally disordered soul, combined with reason or intellect (the vocabulary shifts and the accounts vary somewhat). As we have seen already in the case of his theodicy (the theory designed to keep god free from evil), Plutarch is convinced that some form of dualism is indispensable (*De an. procr.* 1024D–1025A, 1026A–C). The same goes for his psychology: if there were only reason, the soul would be rational through and through. However, if that were so, we would be unable to account for irregularity and disorder, both on a cosmic and on a human scale. If the world were to be governed by a thoroughly rational world soul there would be no irregularities (for instance in the motions of the planets) and no natural disasters. But we know that these really happen.

The very idea that the world is governed by a world soul already marks an important difference from the Stoics. The Stoics, as we have seen, hold the view that the world is governed directly by god, who, as an active principle or *logos*, is present everywhere and completely pervades the cosmic body. Plutarch, on the contrary, makes god – an intellect (*De Is. et Os.* 352A; *Quaest. Plat.* III, 1002B; *De an. procr.* 1024C–D)⁸ – transcendent, inserting the level of soul as an intermediate between intellect and body. Like the Stoic *logos* or active principle, the Platonic world soul is immanent in the world. The god of the Stoics can indeed also be described as a cosmic soul or governing principle (*hégemonikon*). Their mistake, from Plutarch's perspective, is their failure to understand that one also needs a principle that transcends this level: they locate god at the level of the world, and not beyond it.

Plutarch describes the combination of the two components of soul as the reception, by the irrational soul, of rationality. When this happens, the irrational soul, in itself a principle of random motion, becomes well ordered, but not completely: a vestige of irrationality will always remain and can sometimes even be quite strong. The rationality which the soul receives is given to it by god, as a part of himself. This distinguishes the mode of production of the soul from that of mere artifacts: in the latter case, the maker remains completely separate from the product. In the soul, however, god is as it were directly present. The soul has not just been created *by* the craftsman-god, but also *out of* him and so contains in itself a portion of what is his (*De sera* 559D). When Plutarch describes the relation between god and the soul (not the original irrational soul, whose existence is independent of god, but the composite soul and in particular its rational part), he uses not only the father-analogy, borrowed from Plato, but also strong

metaphorical language dear to the Stoics: contrary to a mere maker of lifeless artifacts, a father is somehow present in his child; his physical and character traits are really part of who the child is. Likewise, in every created soul there is a “fragment” (*apospasma*) and “part” (*morion*) of the procreator, who “sowed” (*enkatespeiren*) from himself “divinity and vitality” into matter (*Quaest. Plat.* II, 1001A–B). There can be no doubt that this imagery is directly taken from the Stoics (cf. *De cohib. ira* 462F; Theod. *Gr. aff. cur.* 5.25; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 15.20.1 (SVFI 128)). By using it, Plutarch risks adopting the immanentist ontological framework of the Stoics, which he otherwise carefully avoids doing. So why did Plutarch choose these metaphors? Obviously to emphasize the idea that the rational soul has a very special relation to god and is itself divine. God as a father is not divorced from his offspring, as a mere maker would be. (The demiurge is called a maker *and* father in the *Timaeus*, 28C3–4. Plutarch’s *Quaest. Plat.* II is an exegesis of this expression.) In a paradoxical way, the relation between father and offspring combines transcendence with immanence (cf. Ferrari (1996)). God is present in the soul, but also exists independently from it.

Despite the vocabulary, Plutarch does not completely move over to the Stoic position: the rational soul is not divine to the same extent as the separate intellect (i.e. god), and it always has to cope with a recalcitrant element, the “ancient nature” of the irrational soul. This is true not just for the cosmic soul, but also for our individual human souls, with this difference, however, that the irrational element is stronger in the latter (*De an. procr.* 1025D, 1026D–E).

4. Moral Psychology

The account of the composition of the soul is of the utmost importance for Plutarch’s ethics and sets him apart sharply from the Stoics. In the human soul, there is nothing that is unmixed and pure: the two components are inextricably intertwined (*De virt. mor.* 443B–C; *Quaest. Plat.* IX, 1008C; *De an. procr.* 1026C) in such a way that you will never find either an emotion or passion (*pathos*) devoid of reason or an activity of the mind, untainted by desire or ambition (*epithymia*, *philotimia*). The close relation between the two components of our souls has led to opposing errors of judgment: some, i.e. Aristotelians, think that virtues are situated in, and constituted by, the passions, while others believe that passions are merely erroneous judgments (*De an. procr.* 1025D). The latter error is that of the Stoics. Since they have a monistic view of the soul, which they consider to be inherently rational and divine, they cannot help but consider the passions to be reason. Virtue, they claim, is “a certain disposition (*diathesis*) of the governing part of the soul and a power (*dynamis*) engendered by reason, or rather reason (*logos*) itself.” Passion, on the contrary, is the same part of the soul disposed in a different way and is nothing but a rational mistake. For indeed, there is no passionate and irrational part of the soul that would be distinguishable from its rational faculty (*De virt. mor.* 441C). On this Stoic account, when the soul becomes virtuous or vicious it is changed throughout and, as a whole, comes to be disposed in a different way, thus becoming either virtue or vice. This is an error with damaging consequences. Plutarch condemns it without ambiguity: the truly twofold and composite nature of the soul eludes these philosophers (*De virt. mor.* 441D).

The refutation of this error is the main goal of Plutarch's theoretical treatise on moral virtue, *De virtute morali* (cf. Ingenkamp (1999); Opsomer (2012) 315–317). For the different views on the constitution of the soul entail different views on what constitutes virtue and vice, on how to become and remain virtuous, and on how to combat passions. What is worse: given their wrong ideas, the Stoics *cannot* be successful in their treatment of the passions of the soul, which are the soul's disease. For their therapy pursues the wrong aim: Stoics think that it is possible, albeit extremely difficult, to reach a state of passionlessness or *apatheia*, and that this is what one should strive for. Instead, Plutarch believes, one should conceive of virtue as reason imposing the right mean between opposite passions: *metriopatheia*, that is. *Metriopatheia* implies that the superior part of the soul keeps the inferior part in check and does not permit it to transgress its boundaries. This reflects the account of the creation of the cosmic soul, and analogously also of the human souls: the rational part is joined to the irrational and imposes order on what was disorderly. Since the (orthodox) Stoics have a wrong, monolithic conception of the soul, they think it should be possible to become completely rational, which happens when the soul forms no erroneous moral judgments. As there is according to them no independent irrational part or faculty, it should be possible to eradicate the passions completely. Once that is achieved, they claim, one has become wise and it has become impossible to err. As long as this state has not been reached, we should strive for it. Plutarch considers all of this, which is essentially Chrysippus' view, illusory. Chrysippus' account has moreover additional unwelcome consequences. He is forced to deny phenomena of which we have vivid experiences, such as mental conflict and weakness of will (cf. *De virt. mor.* 446E–447A, with Inwood (1985) 137–138).

This view is not just mistaken, Plutarch argues, it is also harmful. For it seduces us into believing that once we have overcome a certain bad inclination, we no longer have to worry about it: we have left it behind. Nothing could be more dangerous! We should rather realize that the irrational is a constitutive part of our souls. Hence we can never get rid of it. A vicious inclination that we have overcome has merely become less strong, so that we no longer perceive it. But it lurks unseen in the background, just waiting for an opportunity to seize control over us again. It will see its chance when we become less attentive to the danger. And the illusion of security is just what the Stoic theory tends to create. That is why Plutarch in the works that provide concrete moral advice insists on the never-abating threat posed by the passions. The key to success is the awareness of the irrational in us. We should always watch out for its presence and tricks. "The one mode of protection," Plutarch writes, "is to realize and always remember that our soul has two sides" (*De ad. et am.* 61D). Accordingly, Plutarch develops a Platonic program for the therapy of the soul that, although it is very similar to the Stoic and adopts many of its techniques (these techniques are examined in Rabbow (1914); Ingenkamp (1971); Hadot (1995); Foucault (1984)), is held to constitute a decisive improvement over the Stoic therapy of the soul, as it purports to be based on a sound theory of the human soul. This shows the interconnections between various sub-domains of philosophy: the correct cosmological account enables the philosopher to develop a true account of the human being (a reliable "anthropology," in the original sense of the word), and this provides the basis for a theory of virtue and vice, which again gives us the principles on which to base our practical moral advice and helps us to care in the right manner for our own souls (cf. Ferrari (2007)).

A further consequence of the mistaken Stoic view on the human soul consists in the fact that they are unable to come up with a convincing theory of moral progress. This is argued in the treatise *De profectibus in virtute*, which primarily addresses the Chrysippean version of the system, and ignores later developments (cf. Roskam (2005a) 222–223). Plutarch acknowledges that the (older) Stoics want there to be moral progress, but argues that their system does not allow them to conceive of progress without becoming inconsistent. Moreover, in particular, it makes it inconceivable that one would ever *perceive* that one is making moral progress. For on the orthodox position the attainment of virtue is an all-or-nothing business, as there is nothing between virtue and folly (*De prof.* 75B–76B. See also *Stoic. abs. poet.* 1057E–F; *Comm. not.* 1062B).⁹ Plutarch is very critical of this doctrine, which holds that only the perfectly wise are virtuous (*De prof. virt.* 75F; *De Stoic. rep.* 1038C–1039D; *Comm. not.* 1067F).

Plutarch is not always unaware of the difference between earlier and later Stoics. As a matter of fact, in *De virtute morali* he gives a short survey of different Stoic views on virtue and the virtues (*De virt. mor.* 440E–441B; for a lucid discussion of these different views, see Cooper (1999) 90–107). The first philosopher to be mentioned is Menedemus of Eretria (not a Stoic but rather a follower of Stilpo of Megara), who proclaimed virtue to be one and denied any plurality to it, despite its many names. This leads Plutarch to the view of Aristo of Chios, who likewise held that virtue is one, calling it health. In virtue of different “relative dispositions” (*pros ti pōs*) (for this Stoic ontological category – a type of body – see Long and Sedley (1987) ch. 29), however, depending on the objects at which it is directed, distinctions can be made. Just like sight when it is applied to white objects becomes white sight, so virtue when applied to what is to be done or avoided is called prudence; when it is directed toward desires it becomes temperance; when it is applied to human relations, it is called justice; and so on. Plutarch next cites Zeno for a similar view, when he defines “prudence,” by which, his supporters claim, he means wisdom, as either justice, or temperance, or fortitude, depending on that to which it is directed. Plutarch ends his Stoic doxography with Chrysippus, who unwittingly multiplied the number of virtues and devised many different names for the new virtues distinguished by him. These distinctions, so Plutarch informs us, rest on the idea that each virtue is what the Stoics call a “peculiarly qualified” (for the “peculiarly qualified [body],” see Long and Sedley (1987), ch. 28), which gives them a much stronger identity than Aristo’s relative dispositions. This doxography shows that Plutarch was familiar with different Stoic views on moral psychology, and more specifically that he was aware of an important doctrinal difference between the position of Chrysippus and that of Aristo (see also *De Stoic. rep.* 1034C–E, 1046E–1047A, 1047E–1048C). Nevertheless, when he speaks about the Stoics indiscriminately, it is usually the orthodox Chrysippean view that is the object of his criticism. The result is that “the Stoicism attacked by Plutarch often represents only a portion of Stoic beliefs” (Hershbell (1992b) 3346; see also Grilli (1988) 16).¹⁰

The fundamental differences should not obscure the commonalities between Plutarch’s Platonic ethics and that of the Stoics. Both share a concern for virtue and provide specialized advice on how to safeguard it, casting themselves in the role of moral experts. As has become clear, Plutarch has a less radical and less rigid view on the essence of virtue, admits gradations of virtue and moral progress, attributes a larger role to external circumstances for the acquisition of virtue, and values the importance of external

goods more than is allowed on the orthodox Stoic view (cf. *Comm. not.* 1060D–E, 1063F–1064C). Yet Plutarch too admires the moral accomplishments of exemplary Stoics (cf. Duff (1999) 155–158), acknowledges the merit and use of Stoic moral philosophy (see, e.g., *Ag. et Cleom.* 23 [2], 6), and even tends toward the view that virtue is sufficient for happiness (cf. Opsomer (2011) 172–173; Nikolaidis (2011) 214–215).

5. Polemics

The tone of the polemical works is sharper, but that is of course connected with the genre. Plutarch's criticism at times even appears to be unfair or disingenuous,¹¹ but that too conforms to the laws of the genre. It is commonly assumed that Plutarch could rely on an Academic tradition of anti-Stoic arguments, but used them in an original way (cf. Hershbell (1992b) 3346). In *De Stoicorum repugnantiis* Plutarch is involved in exposing inconsistencies in the system, often quoting passages from different works and philosophers. In the meantime, he criticizes various Stoic doctrines. Another work, *De communibus notitiis*, deals with so-called common notions or preconceptions in the domain of ethics and physics. Another work, now lost, was to deal with dialectics.¹² The aim of *De communibus notitiis* is not to show that Stoic philosophy contradicts common opinion, but rather to show up the opposition between Stoic doctrine and its own principles, yet in the second part of the work Plutarch also attempts to show that Stoic physics offends common sense. The expression “common notions” (*koinai ennoiai*) or “preconceptions” (*prolēpseis*) has a technical significance and refers to the reliable starting points, accessible to human reason, from which philosophy can develop its theories. They are natural criteria of truth (cf. Alex. Aphr. *De mixt.* 218.10–13). Plutarch wants to show that Stoic theory often contradicts these natural rational principles (*Comm. not.* 1059E–1060A).

Of the work *Stoicos absurdiora poetis dicere* we only possess a synopsis. The main argument amounts to the claim that Stoics make more aberrant claims than even the poets and their heroes. Another work, *De sollertia animalium*, the topic of which is animal intelligence, is often considered to be an anti-Stoic work: in it Plutarch attacks the Stoic teaching according to which animals do not possess reason (*De soll. an.* 959A–965B, 985C; cf. Dierauer (1977) 253–272; Sorabji (1993) 18, 78–79, 179; Newmyer (2006) 17–47; Mossman and Titchener (2011)).

So far I have emphasized the fact that Plutarch's main purpose in the explicitly anti-Stoic works is to show that the Stoic doctrines contain contradictions and that, also in their lives, the Stoics are not consistent with what they teach (for the contradiction between life and teaching, see, e.g., *De Stoic. rep.* 1033B–1034C). Yet inconsistency is not the only thing Plutarch is after: occasionally he also makes it quite clear that certain Stoic doctrines are plainly false. I shall just mention a few cases. In the domain of ethics, for instance, Plutarch attacks Chrysippus for not accepting bodily and external goods as contributing to the good life (1060C). In his discussion of Stoic physics, Plutarch rejects the idea that bodies can interpenetrate and can be blended through-and-through (*Comm. not.* 1077E). More generally he objects to the notion that only bodies have real existence, whereas incorporeals are held to exist without counting as “being” (*Comm. not.* 1073D–F). Plutarch reserves his most severe criticism for Stoic theology. He argues that in virtue of the doctrine of periodic cosmic conflagrations Chrysippus is in

fact committed to the idea, sharply condemned by Plutarch, that god is destructible (*De Stoic. rep.* 1051E–1052E; see also *Comm. not.* 1075A–E; Dillon (2002) 224, 228–229). What is even worse, although the Stoics are officially committed to the view that the gods are beneficent, many of their more specific doctrines in fact invalidate that view (*De Stoic. rep.* 1055D). These contradictions have the effect of undermining our belief in the gods and providence (*De Stoic. rep.* 1048B). Their theories therefore cause great harm, as they upset the very foundations of religious belief and threaten the established traditions (*Comm. not.* 1074E–F).

6. Caution and the Quest for Truth

At the beginning of *De communibus notitiis* we are reminded of the historical dispute between Stoics and Academics (1058F–1059C). This is no coincidence. Plutarch probably agrees with the Hellenistic “skeptical” Academics that one should give up the Stoic dream of reaching infallible knowledge through self-certifying “cataleptic” impressions (cf. Opsomer (2005) 174; for Stoic epistemology, see Long and Sedley (1987) chs. 39–42). The ideal of epistemic infallibility is the intellectual counterpart to the ethical goal of passionlessness. The Stoics thought that knowledge of this kind is needed while conducive to happiness, but Plutarch believes their theories, which they think are based on infallible preconceptions about the world, the gods, the nature of human beings, and virtue, produce the opposite effect. Hence he calls for Academic caution (*eulabeia*). It is strongly advisable to withhold one’s judgment in areas where no certain knowledge can be reached. That is why the philosophy of the Academy, far from being skeptical in the modern sense of anti-religious, in fact protects traditional faith (cf. *De aud. poet.* 17D–E; *Amat.* 756B; *De Pyth. or.* 402E; *De def. or.* 435E; *Crass.* 38.3; *Cam.* 6.6). Thus Academic caution perfectly suits Plutarch’s conservative mindset as far as religious matters are concerned. His less dogmatic and more integrative approach to philosophy has another advantage: it made him write dialogues in which his philosophical rivals, in particular Stoics, play a prominent role and offer genuine contributions in the common search for truth.

NOTES

- 1 The history of the concept of eclecticism is discussed in Donini (1988). For a sympathetic study of the thought of Potamo, the only ancient philosopher whose aim it appears to have been to found a self-consciously eclectic school, see Hatzimichali (2011).
- 2 It was Eduard Zeller who attempted to give a scholarly corroboration of Hegel’s view that philosophy in Plutarch’s time was eclectic. This view was based on *a priori* ideas about the development of philosophy. It was Zeller’s aim to confirm Hegel’s insights by solid philological and historical research. Already in the first edition of his history of Greek philosophy he calls Plutarch a Pythagorean Platonist, but also an eclectic, who was strongly influenced by Stoicism. Cf. Zeller (1868) 141, 144–145. Zeller’s arguments were copied by Schroeter (1911).
- 3 This issue is discussed in great detail by Reydam-Schils (1999). See also the influential, but not uncontroversial, paper by Sedley (2002).

- 4 The dialogue *De sera numinis vindicta* only starts after a character that goes by the name of Epicurus leaves the party (548A–C). Obviously, his exit makes a serious philosophical conversation possible. Some editors have changed the name “Epicurus” to “the Epicurean,” because they thought it would not make sense, for chronological reasons, to have the founder of the school himself converse with Plutarch and his friends. Probably, however, Plutarch simply named or nicknamed the character after the founder of the school to which he is presented as belonging. It would be wrong to infer from this passage that Plutarch had no sympathy or respect at all for Epicureanism, though he is more outspokenly opposed to Epicureans than he is to the Stoics. Cf. Hershbell (1992a).
- 5 Plutarch is moreover convinced that providence intervenes in the course of events when it judges this to be useful: see, e.g., *Sert.* 1.1–3.
- 6 This passage may not be directed primarily against the Stoics, but they are probably included in Plutarch’s criticism.
- 7 In this case the solution is proposed by Cleombrotus’ theory of evil demons. Even if it is not certain whether Plutarch himself would endorse this solution (Plutarch’s views on evil demons are not very clear), Cleombrotus’ account is definitely Platonically inspired and fills the Platonic slot in the typical dialectical grid.
- 8 Plutarch invariably describes the higher part of the soul as an intellect or as intelligible (the two terms being interchangeable for him). For an alternative view, based primarily on later testimonies identifying the higher of the two components as a rational *soul*, see Baltes (2005) 91–99.
- 9 For an analysis of Plutarch’s position and a possible Stoic defence, see Roskam (2005a) 224–247.
- 10 This is of course connected to the question of Plutarch’s sources. Cf. Hershbell (1992b) 3339–3342.
- 11 It is sometimes not easy to decide whether Plutarch in construing difficulties foists views on his opponents to which they should not be committed. Cf. Cherniss (1976) 401–406, 655. For an analysis of such a complex case (whether gods and sages sometimes deceive us by inducing false mental images), see Inwood (1985) 85–86.
- 12 See the Lamprias Catalogue, item 78. Cf. Babut (1969a) 36–37. Plutarch appears to have felt some admiration for Stoic dialectics, for instance for the theory of the hypothetical syllogism. Cf. *De E* 386E–387A.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The most comprehensive study of Plutarch's attitude toward Stoics and Stoicism is still Babut (1969a). Hershbell (1992b) offers useful additions and corrections. The notes in Cherniss (1976) and Casevitz and Babut (2002) and (2004) are invaluable for understanding Plutarch's criticism of individual Stoic tenets. Long and Sedley (1987) is the best place to study the philosophy of the Stoics and other Hellenistic schools. It contains extensive philosophical analyses of the most important texts. This can be combined with Algra, Barnes, Mansfeld, and Schofield (1999), which offers more synoptic accounts of philosophical issues as they were discussed in various schools.

CHAPTER 7

Plutarch and Epicureanism

Eleni Kechagia-Orseiko

1. Introduction: The Epicureans in Plutarch's Work

Epicurus was no stranger to Plutarch. Aspects of Epicurean philosophy are discussed and dissected in a number of Plutarch's writings and several Epicurean characters, whether friends or rivals, appear in his dialogues and essays. Even a cursory look through his extant work shows that Plutarch had a good knowledge of and significant interaction with Epicurean philosophy, its representatives, and its followers. After Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, Epicurus is the philosopher most frequently mentioned in the Plutarchan corpus. As a result, Plutarch features prominently among the sources in collections of Epicurean testimonies and fragments; his work has, undoubtedly, played an important role in the transmission of Epicureanism.

However, Plutarch's familiarity with Epicurean philosophy and his apparently congenial relations with contemporary Epicurean followers such as Boethus (*De Pyth. or.* 396D–E; *Quaest. conv.* 720E–F) or Alexander (*Quaest. conv.* 635E–F) do not necessarily imply that he was a supporter of Epicurus in any sense. Far from it. A closer look at his work quickly reveals that his attitude to Epicureanism was generally hostile and his take on the Epicurean theories was more often than not critical and dismissive. It is rather telling that the only treatises in Plutarch's surviving corpus that are wholly dedicated to a discussion of Epicurean philosophy are polemical: the *Adversus Colotem* is a detailed refutation of an Epicurean book written by Colotes, a close friend and student of Epicurus; the *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* is a comprehensive critique of the main Epicurean ethical doctrine, namely that pleasure is the ultimate goal in human life; and the *De latenter vivendo* attacks the well-known Epicurean view that life in the limelight is to be avoided. What is more, the Lamprias Catalogue contains a number of titles of what seem to be further anti-Epicurean critiques, unfortunately now lost:

A Reply to Epicurus' Lecture on Gods (No. 80), *On Epicurean Self-Contradictions* (No. 129), *On "What is up to Us" in Reply to Epicurus* (No. 133), *That the Epicureans Speak More Paradoxically than the Poets* (No. 143), *On Lives against Epicurus* (No. 159). But Plutarch's general anti-Epicurean feelings can also be seen in works that are not exclusively concerned with Epicurean philosophy. For example, in his *De Pythiae oraculis* the Epicurean Boethus is mocked for his rejection of divination and his belief in chance as an overriding factor in the Epicurean universe. In the *De defectu oraculorum* we find passages in which Epicurean views such as the infinity of the world and the theory of *eidōla* are rebuked. In the *De sera numinis vindicta* Plutarch defends the idea of divine providence against the Epicurean opposition to it.

One may reasonably wonder: Why did Plutarch dedicate considerable energy, as it seems, to combating Epicurean philosophy, whether in self-contained treatises or through anti-Epicurean arguments embedded in his other works? And if he is so hostile toward Epicurus and his school, of what use to us is his, supposedly, biased testimony and his impassionate interpretation of Epicurean doctrines? Overall, what are we to make of Plutarch's engagement with the philosophy of the Garden? In this chapter I will discuss the first question by considering the intellectual and philosophical background of Plutarch's work and the place of Epicureanism in it; and I will explore the second and third questions by looking more closely into the way in which Plutarch interpreted and interacted with the philosophy of the Garden in his three extant anti-Epicurean works.¹

2. Epicureanism in Plutarch's World: Survival and Hostility

In the history of the Epicurean school we hear of no imposing figures after Philodemus and Lucretius; yet Epicureanism seems to have been still an active philosophical movement with a sizable following in Plutarch's Greco-Roman world (see Erler (2009)). Seneca, for example, testifies to the appeal that Epicurus had, long after his death, not only on the erudite, but also on the uninitiated, uneducated masses ("non tantum eruditiores sed haec quoque inperitorum turba," *Ep.* 79.15–16). Historical and literary evidence suggests that the Epicurean school continued to exist at least up to Hadrian's time (117–138 CE), that is, up to and including Plutarch's lifetime. An inscription (*ILS* 7784, *SIG*³ 834) dated to 121 CE attests to a petition to Hadrian made by Plotina, Trajan's widow and an Epicurean follower, concerning a change in the rules governing the succession of the school. And later still, in 176 CE, the Epicurean school was among the four philosophical schools for which Marcus Aurelius was said to have set up four "professorial chairs" in Athens (see Luc. *Eun.* 3 and Philostr. *VS* 2.2). The Platonist Numenius of Apameia, who was active in the middle to late second century CE, comments on the unity and concord of the Epicurean school and suggests that it continued to have faithful adherents well into his own day and beyond: "[t]he Epicurean sect resembles a true and harmonious state which is of one mind and shares a common point of view. Of this sect there were and there are and, as it seems, there will be followers" (Numen. fr. 24.22–26 Des Places). Similarly, Diogenes Laertius in his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, tentatively dated within the third century CE, claims that "the Epicurean succession continues forever while almost all other schools have

ceased to exist” (Diog. Laert. 10.9). A further testimony of the survival of Epicureanism well into the Christian era is provided by a remarkable monument discovered in the late nineteenth century: the public wall inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda in Lycia, dated to the second century CE, constitutes an outstanding advertisement of Epicureanism and of the benefits of an Epicurean outlook in life.

At the same time, when one turns to scholarly and philosophical texts of that period, one can observe a steady anti-Epicurean tendency. Epicureanism may have survived as a sect appealing to the many, but it attracted criticism from a range of Imperial writers on different counts. To give just a few examples: the Stoic Epictetus, an almost exact contemporary of Plutarch, can be seen to have spoken out against Epicureanism on several occasions in his *Discourses* (*Against Epicurus* 1.23; *Against the Epicureans and Academics* 2.20; *In Response to the Reformer of Free Cities who is Epicurean* 3.7). Atticus, a second-century CE Platonist, criticized Epicurus’ theory of gods and his denial of divine providence (fr. 3 Des Places). The Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias is said to have written a work against an Epicurean named Zenobius (Simpl. *In Ph.* CAG 9 Diels, 489.20). In Galen’s own bibliography, his *De libris propriis*, we find a number of titles of writings he directed against Epicureanism (19.48 Kühn). The Christians Clement of Alexandria and Origen were also hostile to Epicureanism, their antipathy stemming from their Christian metaphysical and ethical beliefs (see, e.g., Clem. Al. *Strom.* 1.11.50, 6.8.67; *Protr.* 5.66; Origen, *C. Cels. passim*).

The hostility toward Epicureanism on the part of the other three philosophical schools active alongside the Epicureans in the Roman Empire, namely the Stoics, the Platonists, and the Peripatetics, is to a great extent understandable. In the wake of the Hellenistic era, in the late second and first centuries BCE, there was a tendency for the representatives both of the “traditional” schools of philosophy, Plato’s Academy (Antiochus of Ascalon) and the Peripatos (Critolaus, Andronicus), and, interestingly enough, of the Stoa (Panaetius and Poseidonius) to look back at the great philosophers of the classical past, Plato and Aristotle, study their writings, and form their philosophical views in response to and by way of interpreting the “old masters.”²² As a result of this appeal to, and focus on, the same classical authorities, a “syncretism” of philosophical views is observable in these three schools during the first century BCE and through to the principate: the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Stoics incorporate elements from each other’s systems, develop philosophical affinities, and eventually turn out to appear as three different branches of the same tradition. It is only the Epicureans who were left out of this tradition: for them the only uncontested and venerable authorities were the master Epicurus and his immediate disciples (Metrodorus, Polyaeus, Hermarchus) to whom they showed faithful devotion. It is worth noting here that Epicurus himself had claimed independence from the previous philosophical tradition, whilst his followers in the early days of the school were mainly concentrated on promoting their master’s original doctrines by criticizing their professional rivals; among the early Epicurean literature surviving in fragments today we find polemics against the Presocratics, Plato, and Aristotle. Accordingly, the Epicureans of the first century BCE (Zeno of Sidon, Demetrius Laco, Philodemus) were not concerned to study, interpret, and connect with the work of Plato or Aristotle, but to preserve the authenticity of Epicurus’ tenets and defend the originality and truth of the great master’s doctrines against his rivals. So, if the Stoics, Peripatetics, and Platonists fought with each other over the claim to the heritage of Plato

and Aristotle, the Epicureans fought against all three collectively over the claim to true philosophical wisdom, which for them was to be found only in Epicurus.³ It then comes as no surprise that in the early Roman Empire the Epicureans, who appeared as the “misfits” in the mainstream philosophical debates of the day, were treated by the representatives of the other schools at least with suspicion, if not with outright hostility.

3. Plutarch's Platonism vs. Epicureanism

When seen against this background, Plutarch's negative attitude toward Epicureanism in his writings is not too difficult to explain. As a confessed adherent to Platonism, Plutarch belongs to the tradition that looked back to Plato and Aristotle and appropriated, whether openly or covertly, elements from their thought. His philosophical outlook is, therefore, almost by default in opposition to that of the Epicurean school which rejected any influence from or connections with the classical philosophers.⁴

To be more specific, according to Plutarch's metaphysics, the utmost driving force in the creation of the world is an immaterial principle, God or the One, that is eternal, unchanging, and uncontaminated by matter (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 351D, 382B–C; *De E* 392E–393B–C). God, much like the Demiurge of the Platonic *Timaeus*, is the principle of order, goodness, and intelligence. Plutarch also believed that there is a negative force operating in opposition to God, namely the Indefinite Dyad, which is the principle of disorder, chaos, and badness and which has to be tamed by the God (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 369E–372E; *De def. or.* 428F–429B; *De anim. procr.* 1017A–B, 1026E–1027A). Before the creation of the world, matter was in a disorderly, chaotic state, under the influence of the Indefinite Dyad. It is God that acts upon matter and imposes reason, order, and stability, thus creating the cosmos, the ordered world (*De anim. procr.* 1024C; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 374E–F); matter by itself is unable to create anything. Now Plutarch's belief in some kind of “divine creation” and the emphasis he lay on immaterial principles, the One and the Dyad, whose interaction results in the generation of the cosmos, is in absolute contrast with Epicurean materialism, which explains the world in terms of atomic interactions only, and without any reference to principles of a higher order. For the Epicureans, any Platonist appeal to a divine driving force in the universe would be not only redundant but also dangerous in that it leads to superstitious religious beliefs and poses an obstacle to a rational, happy life free from irrational fears. But for Plutarch, what was totally misguided and unintelligible is the Epicurean view that there is nothing over and above the atomic primary entities, which are material, soulless, and without any generative powers.

As far as psychology is concerned, the Platonist Plutarch believes that the soul is responsible for motion and life in all living beings and that the human soul is part of the world soul which is constructed when the God-creator imparts reason on the non-rational pre-cosmic soul. The human soul, therefore, shares the nature of the world soul: it partakes of divine reason whilst keeping a non-rational aspect, and is not subject to change or corruption. Plutarch is also committed to the idea of the survival of human soul after death and takes reincarnation as a matter of course (cf. *De fac.* 942C–945D). By contrast, the Epicureans assert that the soul, like everything else in the world, is only made of atoms and the void and that it dissolves when we die. In this way they preclude dualism: life, reason, and feeling are only a matter of a certain kind of atomic interaction.

Moreover, by arguing for the mortality of the atomic soul, the Epicureans seek to eliminate the possibility of an afterlife and to free human beings from anxieties associated with the belief in life after death. It is not difficult to see why, given his Platonist psychology, Plutarch must have found the Epicurean idea that the soul is entirely material and simply dissolves with death hard to swallow and open to criticism.

In epistemology, contrary to Epicurus' firm belief in the reliability of the senses and the possibility of attaining knowledge by relying on the incontestable sensory evidence, Plutarch adopts a more cautious and skeptically inclined view, in line with the Skeptical Academy toward which he appears to be sympathetic (cf. *Comm. not.*, but also the defense of Arcesilaus in *Adv. Col.* 1121E–1124C). Although he never openly advocates suspension of assent (*epochē*), he seems to believe that, if any firm knowledge is possible, this has to come through continuing inquiry. And when matters are unclear, Plutarch does not hesitate to leave the question open for further inquiry (see *De sera* 549D; *De prim. frig.* 955C; cf. also the aporetic style of many of the conversations in the *Quaest. conv.*). Plutarch recognizes that the nature of the sensible world is such that firm knowledge about it is not possible to attain simply by looking into the natural causes of things. The best one can do in this respect is to produce plausible (*eikos*) accounts. True knowledge can only be achieved with respect to the intelligible, divine causes operating in the universe (*De def. or.* 435E–436A; *De prim. frig.* 968B–C), and it is the task of philosophy to train one's soul toward understanding the divine workings of the world. Plutarch's attitude toward knowledge may not be utterly negative, but it is still a far cry from Epicurus' confidence in human knowledge acquired through the senses.

Finally, in the field of ethics Plutarch's views are inevitably opposed to Epicurean hedonism and the idea that the *summum bonum* for human life is pleasure. For Plutarch the Good is likeness to God and it is this assimilation to the divine that all human beings ought to pursue in order to attain happiness (cf. *De Is. et. Os.* 382D–E; *De sera* 550D–E, fr. 143 Sandbach). Moreover, Plutarch is above all a moralist and devotes much of his literary activity to teaching people how to become better men through his *Moral Essays* (*Moralia*). Given the emphasis he lays on moral virtue, which in his view harmonizes the irrational and the rational parts of the human soul, Plutarch's opposition to the Epicurean ethical theory comes as no surprise: a theory that makes pleasure – primarily understood by Plutarch as bodily pleasure – the ultimate goal of all human endeavor has no place in his Platonist world, where human beings are meant to achieve utmost happiness by striving for virtue.

4. Plutarch against Epicurean Materialism, Empiricism, and Pleasure

Plutarch's critical engagement with the philosophy of the Garden is unsurprising and understandable, especially when, in addition to the general philosophical climate of his day, we take into account his own Platonist beliefs. But what are the messages to take away from Plutarch's criticism of Epicureanism? And what is the value, for the modern reader, of the three Plutarchan anti-Epicurean treatises? I will now take a closer look at each of these three fascinating pieces of philosophical polemic and examine some of Plutarch's most important claims against Epicurean philosophy.

Adversus Colotem

Colotes was a student and close friend of Epicurus from the early days of the school in the late fourth century BCE. We do not know much about his life, but one thing that emerges clearly from what remains of his work is that Colotes must have been a dedicated Epicurean activist. He wrote at least three anti-Platonic polemics (*Against Plato's Lysis*, *Against Plato's Euthydemus*, *Against Plato's Myths*), preserved only in patchy fragments, but he is better known for his all-embracing critique against the Greek philosophers which must have also been intended as an indirect advert for Epicureanism. It is this work of Colotes that Plutarch discusses in the *Adversus Colotem*. Indeed, it is thanks to Plutarch's testimony that Colotes' polemic has been transmitted to us today.

Plutarch tells us that Colotes' book was read out during one of the gatherings he had with his friends and students in his informal philosophy school in Chaeronea. The main argument of this book was that all the important philosophers up to Epicurus' day, including Parmenides, Democritus, Empedocles, Melissus, Socrates, Plato and his followers, Stilpo, the Cyrenaics, and Arcesilaus, held philosophical theories that were incompatible with human life and would lead to absurd consequences if they were to be followed in everyday life. Colotes' claims in his pamphlet were apparently so provocative that Plutarch's companions demanded a response. The *Adversus Colotem* offers just that: a section by section refutation of the Epicurean's claims.

Plutarch's detailed response to Colotes is an important text for the historian of Greek philosophy: not only does it transmit a number of fragments from Epicurus' writings and testimonies about Epicurean theories, but also it preserves material, which would have been otherwise lost, from the work of the philosophers attacked by Colotes.⁵ However, this text is particularly interesting for another reason – it provides us with an excellent opportunity to examine and assess in a systematic way Plutarch's Platonist objections against two main aspects of Epicurean philosophy – physics and epistemology.

With respect to physics, Plutarch takes to task the Epicurean atomic theory and argues that this is incoherent and misguided. Plutarch starts off by arguing that Epicurus' version of atomism is no better than that of Democritus, which Colotes had criticized in his polemic. Epicurus posited the very same primary entities as Democritus: imperceptibly small and indivisible bodies that have no qualities other than shape and size and are immune to change. But whereas Democritus acknowledged that positing this kind of primary entities meant that there can really be no sensible qualities, except by convention, Epicurus refused to follow through the consequences of his postulation. Plutarch maintains that, despite the emphasis the Epicureans lay on the objective reality of sensible qualities, such as sweetness or color, their theory suffers in that it fails to explain how it is possible for quality-less and unchangeable primary entities to generate compound beings that have qualities and are subject to qualitative alterations. If Epicurus wants to believe *both* that the atoms are quality-less and unchangeable *and* that the compound beings deriving from such atoms have qualities and so can be, say, sweet, then he must offer some explanation about how sweetness can be generated from atoms which are neither already sweet (for they are quality-less), nor able to become sweet (for they are unchangeable). Plutarch makes a reasonable point here against Epicurus: although there are a number of texts which demonstrate that the Epicureans strongly believe the sensible qualities of

compound beings to be objectively real (see Epicurus, *Ep. Hdt.* 39–40, 68–71; Polyrstr. *De contemptu* 23.26–26.23; Lucr. 1.445–482), no known Epicurean text clearly explains how exactly the objective reality of these qualities is to be secured.

In a similar vein, Plutarch's central objection against Epicurean physics in the *Adversus Colotem* is that the atomic theory effectively makes it impossible for any real generation to take place both of animate, ensouled beings and, more generally, of compound objects of any kind. Plutarch argues that: "the atom taken in itself is destitute and stripped of every generative power; and when it collides with another atom, because it is hard and resistant, it only produces a shock and neither suffers nor causes any other affection. Rather, the atoms perpetually receive and inflict blows, and far from being able to generate an animal or a soul or a nature, they cannot even produce a joint collection of themselves nor a unified heap, since they always leap and draw apart" (*Adv. Col.* 1111E–F).⁶ In Plutarch's view material elements alone simply do not suffice to explain the soul and the complex mental phenomena associated with living organisms; there needs to be a power of higher order that acts upon matter and accounts for the creation of ensouled and rational beings. What is more, given that the atoms have no qualities, cannot change or be affected in any way, and also are in constant motion, Plutarch seems to believe that they cannot really interact with each other and blend in a way that would allow them to produce a coherent, unified new entity. In order for real generation of wholly new beings to happen, Plutarch assumes that some kind of "chemical" combination needs to take place such that the primary ingredients can act upon each other and fuse into a new being with properties of its own. This implies that the elements combining are somehow affected and change, which, however, is not possible in the Epicurean atomic system, as the atoms are unaffected and unchangeable. Plutarch's complaint is philosophically plausible, since it touches upon a crucial difficulty with which Epicurean atomism is faced: how to explain adequately (a) something as intuitively non-material as the mind and its function purely on the basis of the material, and (b) the way in which the atoms merge and turn from an aggregate of separate atoms hooked onto each other into an irreducibly different entity. The extant Epicurean texts do not provide sufficient responses to such objections and leave explanatory gaps, which make Plutarch's critique seem all the more justifiable.

Finally, Plutarch makes an interesting point about Epicurean atomism in connection with Colotes' attack against the Platonic Forms. He argues that the Epicurean theory ends up in effect drawing a distinction between two types of being, the everlasting primary entities (atoms) and the changeable compound objects of the sensible world. In this way, Epicurean atomism replicates the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, which underlay Parmenides' theory of being and, of course, Plato's theory of Forms. For, material though they are, the atoms of the Epicurean system are very different from the compound bodies of sensible experience. They are highly theoretical entities, intelligible only through reason; they are unchangeable, indestructible, indivisible, imperceptible. However, according to Plutarch, Epicurus goes wrong in that he does not acknowledge that his system too makes room for two "realities," the intelligible and permanent reality of the atomic level, and the sensible and changeable reality of the macroscopic level. Plutarch suggests that Epicurean atomism is again incoherent: Epicurus cannot *both* hold that there is some sort of divide between two things, the everlasting primary entities and the changeable compounds of atoms, *and* insist that the atoms are the same type of being as, and no more ontologically basic than, the compounds.⁷

Turning now to epistemology (or canonic, according to Epicurean terminology), Plutarch's main target in those sections of the *Adversus Colotem* discussing epistemological questions is the notorious Epicurean thesis that all sense impressions are true. In an attempt to ensure that knowledge is possible to attain, Epicurus argued that our primary sources of information about the world around us, namely our senses, always report reality as it is and are, therefore, trustworthy witnesses, despite instances of apparent perceptual conflict and illusions. Plutarch's first criticism of Epicurus' core epistemological thesis is that making all sense impressions equally true and reliable is no different from relativism: the honey which tastes sweet to me and bitter to my friend could be said to be both sweet and bitter, without contradiction; for both sense impressions are true at the same time and there is no way of selecting one over the other sense impression as more reliable. But this approach does not really help toward getting to know what the things in themselves really are like. To highlight this difficulty Plutarch reports from Epicurus' *Symposium*: when asked if wine is calorific, Epicurus responded that one should not say that wine is generally calorific, but that "this bit of wine is calorific in relation to this type of constitution, whereas that bit of wine is cooling in relation to that type of constitution." The upshot is that, since wine can potentially be both calorific and cooling, following Epicurus' view, it is not possible to use one's senses to reach firm conclusions about the nature of things; the best one can do is make qualified statements reporting one's own interaction with a given sensible object. So, Plutarch suggests that the Epicureans simply find themselves endorsing a position which is very similar to the Protagorean *homomensura* and which, instead of leading to firm knowledge about the world, creates only confusion (cf. *Adv. Col.* 1109E and 1110D–E). This is a serious objection which the Epicureans need to take into consideration if they wish to insist that human knowledge is possible through the senses.

Plutarch's main offensive against Epicurean epistemology comes in the sections of the *Adversus Colotem* discussing the Cyrenaic theory of affections (*pathē*) and Arcesilaus' suspension of assent. Plutarch argues that the Epicurean theory of perception via *eidōla* does not allow for firm assertions about the external world and eventually leads the Epicureans to a position no better than that of the Cyrenaics and the Academic skeptics who refrain from making all kinds of claims about the world around us. According to Plutarch's interpretation, when the Epicureans have a visual perception of a certain object, they can only say that the relevant sense (*aisthēsis*) has been truly affected by the thin images that are emitted from this object (*eidōla*) and are imprinted on the perceiver's sense-organ. However, they cannot express any firm views about what the object itself that gives rise to this particular perception is like. Upon seeing a tower at a distance, the Epicureans will not make the firm assertion that "the tower *is* round"; they will only make assertions about the impressions (*phantasiai*) they receive through the *eidōla*. Whereas the impressions are always true in that they represent the *eidōla* exactly as these are imprinted upon the sense, the *eidōla* affecting the senses may not always correspond to the external object from which they are emitted (for example, in cases of perceptual conflict). That is why, Plutarch claims, the Epicureans prefer to "make firm assertions about their own *pathē* and their *phantasiai*, but do not want to admit that the external objects are so and so" (*Adv. Col.* 1121A). But then the consequence seems to be that the senses end up being not really informative about the actual nature of the world out there and the Epicureans are, therefore, restricted to having access only to their own private

world of impressions. Eventually, Plutarch suggests Epicurus is guilty of the same subjectivist approach to the external world of which Colotes accused the Cyrenaics. To be fair, the Epicureans would respond to Plutarch's accusation by saying that, following the process of attestation or non-counter-attestation, which plays a key part in the Epicurean theory of knowledge, they are actually in a position to make firm assertions about the nature of the external objects. For example, in the case of the tower at a distance that looks round, the Epicureans would go nearer and, if their first impression is "attested" through a second impression received from close by, then they will assert that "the tower is round." However, Plutarch thinks that in so doing the Epicureans contradict their own conviction that all *phantasiai* are considered to be true and equally trustworthy about themselves. According to Plutarch, if all *phantasiai*, whether arising proximately or at a distance, are equally true, then there is no reason whatsoever why the Epicureans should trust more and depend on those from close by in order to make firm assertions about the external world. So the Epicureans should either equally rely on all their *phantasiai*, because they are all true irrespective of the conditions under which these are formed, and make firm assertions about the external objects on all occasions; or they should equally distrust all *phantasiai* and, like the Cyrenaics, make no firm assertions about the external objects at all (1121D). Plutarch shows that the Epicurean theory of perception either ends up being subjectivist or suffers from inconsistency; in either case, it is far from establishing confidence in the possibility of human knowledge.

Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum

Plutarch's second anti-Epicurean treatise, the *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, is presented as a companion piece to the *Adversus Colotem*. In the introduction to this work (*Non posse* 1086C–1087C) we read that, after Plutarch had completed his refutation of Colotes' book and the school session in Chaeronea ended, his friends decided to continue the discussion of Epicurean philosophy by taking up the subject of Epicurean ethics. The *Non posse* is meant to be a record of that discussion. And just like the *Adversus Colotem*, so this anti-Epicurean treatise too is an important source of information for Epicureanism as it preserves a number of testimonies about Epicurean ethics that would have otherwise been unknown. By focusing on the Epicurean theory of pleasure and the relating ethical questions the *Non posse* complements the criticism of Epicurean physics and epistemology offered in the *Adversus Colotem*. In this way Plutarch presents us with an all-round critique of the main Epicurean theses on physics, epistemology, and ethics, that is, the three branches of philosophical inquiry in antiquity.

So in the *Non posse* two of Plutarch's companions, Theon and Aristodemus, set out to demonstrate that the Epicurean ethical theory is such that it makes it impossible for human beings to attain the very goal that the theory itself put forward as the *summum bonum* in human life, namely pleasure. To Colotes' claim that the other philosophers' doctrines made it impossible for humans to live at all, let alone to live a good life, Theon and Aristodemus responded by showing that, following Epicureanism, one would be unable to live a pleasurable life, which, for the Epicureans, was not just the foundation of happiness but also the cornerstone of human life itself (cf. "if you do not allow the Epicureans the possibility of living pleasurably, you are not doing away with the springtime in the year, as the saying goes, but rather you are depriving these men of life," 1087B).

The argumentation in the *Non posse* can be divided in two parts: the first part discusses the Epicurean view that the highest good in human life is pleasure, understood as the absence of pain, and shows why this view is mistaken (1087C–1092D). The second part (1092D–1107A) focuses on different areas of human endeavor and demonstrates that, given their understanding of pleasure, the Epicureans in reality end up depriving themselves of a number of pleasures relating to: (a) the soul and intellect (for example, the pleasures of poetry, history, mathematics), (b) public life (for example, the pleasures deriving from great acts of bravery), (c) the gods (for example, the pleasure of having faith in divine providence), (d) the belief in the afterlife (for example, the pleasure of anticipating a better life after death). I will here focus on the first part and the theoretical objections that Plutarch raises against the fundamental thesis of Epicurean ethics.

To begin with, Plutarch (or rather Theon, whom we can safely take as Plutarch's spokesman here) argues that, by defining the good as "the pleasure of the belly" – the phrase being an impressionistic shorthand for bodily pleasures, supposedly deriving from Metrodorus – the Epicureans make the highest good dependent on "flimsy and unstable" foundations (1087D). To support this claim Plutarch makes a series of brief arguments; he claims, for example, that the body is naturally suited to sustain pain more than pleasure and that this is evidenced by the fact that no part of one's body is immune to pain, whereas very few bodily parts are receptive to pleasure. What is more, bodily pleasures are short-lived and elusive, but pains last longer; now this, according to Plutarch, is a sign that the body is by nature more adaptable to pains than to pleasures. This is further confirmed by the Epicureans themselves, who suggest that bodily pains are easy to bear: Plutarch does not miss the chance to report Epicurus' saying that "when ill, the wise man laughs at the extremities of bodily disease" (1088B–C).

In response to Plutarch's points one could, perhaps, object that the view of Epicurean pleasure presented here is misleading on two counts. First, Plutarch's arguments so far, as presented by Theon, lay emphasis on the pleasures of the flesh, whereas Epicurus did not restrict pleasures to those of the body but also spoke of the pleasures of the soul (or mental pleasures), which surpass bodily pleasures (see Diog. Laert. 10.137). Second, the highest good according to the Epicureans is not the purely sensual pleasures of the flesh, as the opponents to Epicureanism often claim, but rather the absence of bodily pain and mental disturbance (cf. Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 131–132). However, Plutarch seems to be well aware of these two crucial aspects of the Epicurean theory and so makes Theon go on to criticize both of them.

As far as the pleasures of the soul are concerned, the main criticism is that, since these are said to consist in reminiscences of past and in anticipations of future bodily pleasures, they are at least as elusive, unstable, and short-lived as bodily pleasures. According to the Epicureans the highest pleasure is "the stable and settled condition of the flesh and the trustworthy expectation of it" (1089D). However, the flesh, Plutarch observes, is volatile and unpredictable, subject to all kinds of changes and movements which can easily disturb this ideal settled condition. If the pleasures of the soul derive from the hope for a future stable condition of the body, then they end up being no better than a dream: the changeability of the human condition makes such hope futile. On the other hand, if the pleasures of the soul derive from reminiscences of past bodily pleasures, they cannot really be more intense or prolonged, and hence worthier, than the bodily pleasures which caused them: when bodily pleasures do not have significant impact at the time of being

experienced, then it is implausible to think, as the Epicureans do, that the memory of them can have a far greater impact on one's psyche. To illustrate his point Plutarch takes up the metaphor of the leaking vessel (1088E and 1089D–E): by considering the pleasures of the soul to be more stable and intense than those of the body, the Epicureans, he claims, make the soul be nothing other than a “funnel” of the body, in effect decanting pleasure from one leaking vessel, the insatiable body, to another, namely, the soul, which is no more watertight than the body (cf. *Lucr.* 3.936, 6.20ff.).

One might, of course, argue in return that the pleasures of the soul are indeed more stable and intense than those of the body, because they are not necessarily dependent upon or deriving from bodily pleasures. Thus, one can appeal, for example, to the story of the dying Epicurus, who wrote to his close friend Idomeneus that the excruciating bodily pain caused by his terminal illness was overridden by the pleasure of reminiscing about past philosophical conversations (*Diog. Laert.* 10.22). The pleasure Epicurus refers to here can only be an intellectual pleasure experienced through the mind or soul and is so great as to outweigh the physical pain Epicurus felt when on his deathbed. Yet, setting this passage aside, other available texts that discuss Epicurean pleasures suggest that the pleasures of the soul are actually dependent upon bodily pleasures (see, for example, Epicurus fr. 399, 430, 439 Usener). Moreover, taking into account Epicurus' materialist ontology, everything in the world, including the soul, is bodily; hence, it could be suggested that pleasures of the soul are in effect bodily and so are themselves volatile and feeble.

With respect to the Epicurean definition of the highest pleasure as absence of bodily pain and mental disturbance, Plutarch (via Theon) argues that the Epicureans reduce the highest good into something inconsequential and end up in effect doing away with it. Plutarch draws from Metrodorus' (fr. 28 Körte) and Epicurus' (fr. 423 Usener) own sayings, which suggest that the highest good is simply the negation of evil, i.e. pain according to the Epicureans, and that, therefore, there is no room left for pleasure: once their pain is removed, men have achieved their ultimate goal and they do not need pleasure (cf. Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 128). Plutarch finds this hard to square with the Epicurean declaration that pleasure is the highest good toward which all human beings (and for that matter animals too) instinctively strive. The suggestion that there is nothing more to the idea of the Good than the absence of Evil, which appears to have underlain Epicurus' and Metrodorus' sayings, is particularly objectionable for Plutarch: he not only – reasonably – expects the Good to have some positive, added value in itself, but also as a Platonist firmly believes that the Good is associated with God and pervades the world. As such, the ultimate good cannot simply lie in the abolition of evil: relieving oneself from, say, the uncomfortable condition of itching is a good thing, but this does not make scratching the ultimate good (1091E–F).

Plutarch's criticism here is very much dependent upon Plato's views on pleasure as found in the *Republic*. In fact, Plutarch explicitly draws from his master Plato in 1091D–E and echoes the argument found in *Republic* 9 (583c–585a) to the effect that pure and genuine pleasure is something over and above the absence of pain and comes unmixed with pain.⁸ There Socrates argued that for those who are in pain the cessation of it appears to be pleasure, when in reality the absence of pain is a calm state of soul, intermediate between pleasure and pain, which is in itself neither pleasurable nor painful. Conversely, when one's experience of pleasure ends and one returns to this intermediate

state of calm, one takes this state to be one of pain. But such an understanding of pleasure is misguided and, according to Socrates, no better than the mistaken impression that the middle point between the bottom and the top is the highest point possible, an impression which someone has when s/he starts from the bottom and does not yet know what the real highest point looks like. Plutarch appeals to this very example (1091D–E) and concludes that by equating pleasure with painlessness the Epicureans fail to capture the true nature of pleasure and make “the final goal of wisdom a state with which the non-rational animals begin” (1091F–1092A). Painlessness (*aponia*) and freedom from anxiety (*ataraxia*) is a condition toward which animals strive instinctively and to declare this to be the highest good and ultimate goal of all human beings’ rational endeavor is to reduce humanity to the level of non-rational animals. Plutarch is quick to take advantage of the comparison with animals, which is also to be found in the Platonic text (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 9, 586a–b) underlying Plutarch’s argument here, and makes a claim that is similar to the accusation often directed against Epicurus, namely that Epicurean hedonistic ethics lead men to live the life of beasts. Does this mean that Plutarch’s claim verges on the invective at this point? Not really. For, unlike the traditional *topos* of anti-Epicurean invective, the core of Plutarch’s argument is not that the Epicureans live the life of beasts in the sense that they indulge in excessive bodily pleasures and debauchery, but rather that their theory of pleasure makes no room for a distinctively human good based on reason. What is more, *aponia* and *ataraxia* are more likely to be achieved by non-reasoning creatures than human beings whose reasoning capacity causes them to worry about things such as the gods or life after death. Overall, Plutarch’s line is that Epicurean pleasure is an inappropriate *summum bonum* for a human life because it relies on a mistaken understanding of human nature and does not take into account the distinctive characteristic of human beings, namely their rationality.⁹

It is worth noting that Plutarch’s discussion of Epicurean pleasure in the *Non posse* is restricted to the so-called *katastematic* pleasure. Plutarch does not refer to the distinction, attributed to the Epicureans, between *kinetic* and *katastematic* pleasure: the former is the “positive” pleasure experienced when one is in the process of relieving oneself from pain (for example, the pleasure derived when a hungry man is in the process of eating and so relieving himself from the painful condition of hunger); the latter is the “settled” state of calm fulfillment that is reached once the previous painful condition has been abolished. It might, therefore, be argued that Plutarch fails to grasp the details of the Epicurean theory and that his account in the *Non posse* is unreliable, because it does not take into consideration the positive aspect of pleasure which the Epicurean theory certainly included. In Plutarch’s defense, however, it should be said that the distinction and relationship between *katastematic* and *kinetic* pleasure are far from straightforward, as they do not explicitly appear in the extant texts attributed to Epicurus himself, and have, consequently, been questioned by modern scholars.¹⁰ On the other hand, it is clear that Epicurus had placed emphasis on the stable and settled condition of the body and soul (*aponia* and *ataraxia* respectively) as the greatest pleasure and ultimate goal in human life (Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 131; RS 3; Cic. *Fin.* 1.37), presumably, in order to defend himself against the accusation that he advocated crude hedonism. Whether he was aware of a distinction between two types of pleasure or not, it is understandable that Plutarch picked out for criticism the so-called *katastematic* pleasure only, given the prominence it has in Epicurus’ theory.

De latenter vivendo

In this brief anti-Epicurean pamphlet, Plutarch focuses on Epicurus' tenet that life in the limelight, with involvement in public affairs and civic offices, should be avoided, if one is to be happy. Epicurus suggests that "a quiet private life withdrawn from the multitude" (RS 14) is the best way for human beings to attain security, and hence also peace of mind; and that is why the Epicurean wise man will not get into politics (Diog. Laert. 10.119; Epicurus, *Sent. Vat.* 58). For Plutarch, however, whose monumental *Lives* of great statesmen offer an insightful study, but also a praise, of public life and deeds, the Epicurean approach is entirely objectionable; and understandably so.

As a Platonist, Plutarch embraces the Platonic idea of the *Republic's* philosopher-kings (473c–d) and believes that political engagement is an important part, indeed the most perfect part, of human virtue (cf. *Comp. Arist. et Cat.* 3.1; *An seni* 791C). Thus, on a number of occasions throughout his oeuvre Plutarch refers with admiration and approbation to the great political deeds of the philosophers of the past.¹¹ And putting in practice his beliefs, he himself is known to have held public offices in his home town (for example, he was the eponymous archon in Chaeronea; see *Quaest. conv.* 642F and 693F). Moreover, in his essay *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*, Plutarch persuasively argues that philosophers need to take part in political life and be associated with men of power in order to be in a position to have a positive influence upon decision-making for the public good. The contrast between Plutarch's ideal of an active *vita politica* and the Epicurean "quiet life" of personal well-being is evident: in *Maxime cum principibus* (776F–777A) he argues: "the teachings of the philosopher, if they take hold of one person in private station who enjoys abstention from public affairs and circumscribes himself by his bodily comforts ... do not spread out to others, but merely create calmness and quiet in that one man ... but if these teachings take possession of a ruler, a statesman, and a man of action and fill him with love of honor, through one man he (sc. the philosopher) benefits many."

What makes the *De latenter vivendo* particularly interesting is the fact that in this essay Plutarch's criticism of Epicurean "quietism" does not involve – as one would imagine – a praise of political virtue and the value of engagement in public life. In fact Plutarch has already provided such praise in the *Non posse*, when discussing the pleasures of active life which the Epicureans are missing by abstaining from public affairs (see *Non posse* 1097A–1100D). Instead he puts forward a series of arguments, some of which are highly rhetorical, while others have a bearing on Plutarch's ethical and metaphysical beliefs.

Plutarch starts off by claiming that Epicurus is inconsistent: on the one hand, he advocates life in the shadow, away from the public eye; on the other hand, he took pains to publicize his doctrines and to attract followers, thus ensuring that his name survived to posterity. At first sight, this seems to be more of a rhetorical argument than a point of substance. In Epicurus' defense one could respond that in publishing his writings Epicurus was not seeking fame *per se*, but was aiming to assist his fellow human beings in their quest for happiness. Still, Plutarch might have counter-argued that by offering advice, through his writings, about how to attain happiness, Epicurus did in fact engage in a "public deed": he attempted to influence the well-being of his fellow citizens. And in so doing he inadvertently went against his own precept of "live unknown." What is

more, we know of Epicureans who had sidestepped their master's advice and actually engaged in public affairs – for example, Idomeneus, a student of Epicurus who was a court dignitary in Lampsacus. To a certain extent, then, Plutarch's claim, rhetorical though it sounds, does have some grounding. Nonetheless, the Epicureans could still defend themselves by arguing that their master's precept "live unknown" was not meant to be taken as an absolute prohibition, but rather as a piece of advice to be followed if one's personal circumstances so allowed.¹² Does this mean that Plutarch simply misinterpreted Epicurus' advice, taking it, perhaps, too seriously for his own polemical purpose? Perhaps. But it is also worth speculating that Plutarch took the Epicurean precept seriously *because* he expected, or indeed demanded, that a philosopher's word should be consistent with his action (cf. *De Stoic. rep.* 1033A–B). All the more so when Epicurus' philosophy professed to be a therapeutic guide to the happy life that offered practical advice on how to go about living in the form of short, memorable sayings.

Another point Plutarch makes against the Epicurean quietist precept is that encouraging his followers to live their life unknown is beneficial neither for vicious nor for virtuous men. By hiding away from the community and shunning public life, the former have no opportunity to improve or even be cured of their vices, as nobody will be able to reprimand and advise them, while the latter get no chance to exercise their virtue and no means to serve the common good (1128D–1129A). Vice and base actions flourish in darkness, Plutarch claims, and that is why a life of darkness suits the Epicureans, who pursue the pleasures of the flesh as the way to happiness. Plutarch's point here, presented in emotive language and highly rhetorical style, borders on invective and may, therefore, appear rather dubious.

Nonetheless, Plutarch takes a further step and complements this point with a moral and a metaphysical argument. First, he claims that the life of *otium*, away from civic affairs and public duties, leads men to decay (1129C–E; cf. also *De tuenda* 135B–D). Second, he argues that human beings are by nature attracted to illumination and seek to know and be known (1129F–1130C). Once again, these arguments at first sight seem to be rather superficial and impressionistic. But, on a closer look, they do have a firm basis in Plutarch's philosophical background and make an interesting case that cuts to the heart of Epicurean philosophy. Echoing Platonic, but also Aristotelian, ideas about the rational nature of human beings and the value of political life, Plutarch seems to suggest that an essential characteristic of human nature is the instinctive drive toward the "light," that is, truth and knowledge, which can be achieved through theoretical contemplation, but also through a life of active engagement with society and the world around us. A life at the outskirts of society, focused on the selfish pursuit of pleasure, to which Epicurus leads his followers, is incompatible with human nature, because it eventually drives human beings to social and intellectual darkness. Plutarch in effect wishes to show that the Epicurean precept "live unknown" is based on mistaken assumptions about the nature of human beings. Thus Epicurus, whose main aim was to explain the world and human affairs in a way that obliterated anxiety and fear and brought men at ease with their human condition, came up with a tenet that is totally incompatible with the very essence of human nature. It is worth pointing out that the imagery of light and darkness which Plutarch creatively employs here is reminiscent of the sun and cave analogies in the central books of the Platonic *Republic*: breaking away from the darkness of the cave the human soul rejoices in the light of the intelligible world where true knowledge and the good reside. At the same time,

however, the philosopher-kings, who have been illuminated, do return to the cave to govern their fellow-citizens and serve the common good.

Plutarch concludes his brief anti-Epicurean pamphlet with an eschatological argument: he appeals to traditional ancient Greek imagery about the afterlife and contrasts the fate of the pious and good men, who reside blessed in the Elysian fields, with the fate of those who lived a life of crime and impiety and who, after death, are forever cast in darkness (1130C–E). Even though Plutarch does not explicitly say so, it might be assumed that those rewarded in the afterlife are the virtuous men who were involved in public life, whereas the men of crime and impiety must be the Epicureans, who focus on the pursuit of pleasures and are advised to abstain from civic affairs. It is interesting that Plutarch chooses to finish his critique with an argument that has to do with the afterlife, an idea to which the Epicureans were vehemently opposed. Perhaps Plutarch wished to remind his readers of yet another aspect of human nature that Epicurus got wrong, namely the soul's survival after death. Had Epicurus grasped this important truth, he would not have come up with a tenet that encourages men to live a life that dooms one to eternal darkness. At the same time, Plutarch, again, may have been drawing inspiration from the Platonic *Republic* and the concluding myth of Er.

5. Conclusion

Plutarch's attitude toward the philosophy of the Garden may be predictable, given his background, but it is by no means simplistic. Being a committed Platonist, his default position toward Epicureanism is quite understandably one of disagreement and suspicion. Nonetheless, Plutarch is also a knowledgeable scholar and a conscientious teacher who does not just set out to demolish the Epicurean ideas for the sake of polemic only. His three anti-Epicurean writings offer a wealth of information about Epicurus and his ideas, but, most importantly, provide insightful and philosophically justified criticisms of the main Epicurean tenets and demonstrate what pitfalls an aspiring philosopher should avoid when constructing a philosophical theory or a thesis. Plutarch presents his readers with a guide to what a credible philosophical system involves: consistency, integrity, good knowledge of one's philosophical past, and, above all, a solid understanding of human nature. As for the modern readers, Plutarch's critiques of Epicureanism are valuable secondary literature for Epicurean philosophy: they point out the weaknesses of the Epicurean theories, as seen from the perspective of an ancient scholar, and in so doing they invite us to reexamine these theories in the context of the ancient philosophical debates in which they played a part.

NOTES

- 1 For discussions of similar questions in modern scholarship, see Flacelière (1959), Hershbell (1992), Boulogne (2003), and Roskam (2006–2007).
- 2 See Frede (1999) and Sharples (2010) viii.
- 3 See Dillon and Long (1988) 1–13; Sedley (1989); Erler (1994) 210–212; Frede (1999).
- 4 See Dillon, Becchi, Opsomer, and Bonazzi in this volume; also Karamanolis (2010) for a recent useful account of Plutarch's Platonist thought as a whole.

- 5 See Westman (1955).
- 6 The translations of the Plutarchan passages discussed are taken from the Loeb editions, with some modifications.
- 7 See Kechagia (2011).
- 8 For Plutarch's use of the *Republic* and the Platonic undertones in the *Non posse* see Warren (2011).
- 9 See Warren (2011).
- 10 See Gosling and Taylor (1982) 365–396; Purinton (1993).
- 11 For example, *Adv. Col.* 1126A–E. See Roskam (2009) for a discussion of Plutarch's references to the political deeds of great philosophers in his work.
- 12 For this, less restrictive, reading of Epicurus' "live unknown" precept see Roskam (2007a).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Different aspects of Plutarch's attitude toward Epicureanism have been discussed by a number of scholars over the the last fifty years: Flacelière (1959) set the scene by arguing for a development in Plutarch's attitude to the Epicureans from mild acceptance in his early years to outright hostility at the end of his life. Hershbell (1992) provides an overview of the presence of Epicureanism and Epicureans in Plutarch's writings and discusses in general terms the main objections Plutarch raised against the philosophy of the Garden, showing, *contra* Flacelière, that there is no evidence of evolution in Plutarch's attitude. Most recently Boulogne (2003) gives a thematic account of Plutarch's main criticisms against Epicurus and concludes that Plutarch's polemics were not particularly original and were primarily didactic in character. For the value of Plutarch as a source for Epicurean philosophy see Roskam (2006–2007). The three anti-Epicurean treatises have also been discussed individually in modern scholarship: Westman (1955) studied the *Adversus Colotem* as a source for ancient philosophy; Kechagia (2011) provides a close reading of Plutarch's interpretations of Epicurean physics and epistemology in the *Adversus Colotem*. For detailed discussions of the *Non posse* see the commentaries of Adam (1974), Zacher (1982), Albin (1993); Warren (2011) explores the Platonic subtext of the *Non posse* and places Plutarch's critique of the Epicurean theory of pleasure within the framework of Platonic–Epicurean debates. The *De latenter vivendo* has been studied closely by Berner et al. (2000) and more recently by Roskam (2007b). For a discussion of Epicureanism in the Roman Empire with references to the relevant testimonies see Ferguson (1990), Erler (1994) 209–212, Erler (2009). More generally for the philosophical climate of the first two centuries CE see Dillon and Long (1988) 1–13, Sedley (1989), Frede (1999), Trapp (2007).

CHAPTER 8

Plutarch and the Skeptics

Mauro Bonazzi

For Plutarch, skepticism is simultaneously a historical and a philosophical problem.¹ It is a historical problem because skepticism had characterized the teachings of the Platonic Academy for at least two centuries, from Arcesilaus to Philo of Larissa, and this skepticism seemed to be incompatible with the prevalent version of Platonism at the end of the first century BCE. Consequently, the majority of Platonists in the first epoch of the Imperial period, more or less contemporaneous with Plutarch, advanced a radical solution to the problem in considering the Hellenistic Academy to be incompatible with the true teachings of Plato.² This, however, was not Plutarch's position. He continued to identify himself as an Academic in defending the thesis that the Hellenistic Academy could also be legitimately brought back to the more authentic tradition of Platonism.³ Certainly this represents an interesting position, but it is not a simple thing to defend. This is the origin moreover of the philosophical question: Did the defense of the Hellenistic Academy also exercise a skeptical influence on his thought? And if so, in what sense? In short, to what extent is it possible to speak of Plutarch the "skeptic"?

Evidently, both the historical and the philosophical problems are decisive for a correct evaluation of Plutarch's thought. However, the two problems are not easy to resolve. In the first case, namely the interpretation Plutarch offered of the Hellenistic Academy, the primary obstacle is the scarce number of sources at our disposal. In the second case, there is no shortage of texts, but they are contradictory and at odds with one another. As a result of these difficulties, it is no accident that, in view of the delicate affair of Plutarch's skepticism, all possibilities have been considered and scholars are divergent in their opinions. Some deny any interest on Plutarch's part toward skepticism,⁴ while others recognize that in a few periods at least Plutarch sympathized with it,⁵ and finally a third group defend a skeptical interpretation of his thought on the whole.⁶

But whether such divergent theses can be sustained also depends on the precise meaning accorded to the term “skepticism,” a term perhaps more important for us in the modern world than for the philosophers of the first Imperial age.⁷ The first problem is therefore to understand what Plutarch means by “skepticism”; the easiest way to do this is to reconstruct his ideas about the Hellenistic Academy and Pyrrhonism, the two types of skepticism that were discussed in Plutarch’s day. Once this problem is clarified we will be able to understand the sense of his thesis of the unity of the Academic–Platonic tradition. And the clarification of this historiographical problem will allow us finally to offer a response to the question of his personal involvement with skepticism, and its nature and extent.

1. Plutarch on the Difference between the Academics and the Pyrrhonists

The Lamprias Catalogue preserves sequentially the titles of two treatises, unfortunately lost, in which Plutarch confronted the problem of skepticism: *On the Unity of the Academy from the Time of Plato* (CL 63) and *On the Difference between the Pyrrhonists and the Academics* (CL 64).⁸ As Jan Opsomer has correctly observed, the proximity of the two documents in the catalogue is probably not accidental.⁹ On the contrary it is tempting to consider that they constitute a kind of diptych, in which Plutarch confronted the delicate problem of skepticism, defending at the same time the compatibility of the Hellenistic Academy with the tradition of Platonism. In effect, even the simple combination of the two titles allows us to understand what his argumentative strategy was: insisting on the difference between Pyrrhonism and the Academy, Plutarch was able to claim a more moderate form of skepticism for the Academy presented as compatible with the philosophical tradition of Platonism. The scarce ancient sources available to us confirm this reconstruction.

In one of the *Quaestiones convivales* (*Table Talks*), the problem of whether wine had the effect of conferring warmth or not is discussed, and we are reminded of a treatise by Epicurus, the *Symposium*, in which the philosopher seems to have supported apparently paradoxical theses. This therefore impels one of the interlocutors, Lucius Mestrius Florus, a close friend and a *philosophos physis* (*Quaest. conv.* 8.10.1, 734D), to make a vivid comment, affirming that Epicurus leads directly to Pyrrho:

“Now for wine! I should like to know what made you suspect that it is cold.” I replied: “Do you actually think that this is my own theory?” “Whose else?” Florus said. And I answered: “I remember coming on Aristotle’s discussion also of this question, not recently but a long enough time ago. And Epicurus in his *Symposium* has discussed the matter at great length. The sum of what he has to say, I think, is this: he holds that wine is not hot in an absolute sense, but has in it certain atoms productive of heat and others of cold; some of these it throws off when it comes into the body and others it attracts out of the body until it adapts itself to us, whatever our constitution and nature may be. Accordingly, some men become thoroughly hot when drinking, others experience the contrary.” “This,” said Florus, “carries us via Protagoras straight to Pyrrho; for it is clear that we shall go on about oil, about milk and honey, and other things in like manner and shall avoid saying about each what its nature is by defining them in terms of their mixtures and union with each other. But how will you argue on the proposition that the wine is cold?” (651e–652a)¹⁰

The hostile tone against Epicurus makes it more likely that the witty remark also reflects Plutarch's opinion. And the connection with Epicurus (and Protagoras) allows the reconstruction of Plutarch's interpretation of Pyrrhonism.¹¹ Clearly, if Plutarch maintains that Epicurus' statements in the *Symposium* lead to Pyrrho, this depends on the conviction that Epicurus' contrasting statements lack any cognitive stability or validity. We also encounter a similar statement in the *Adversus Colotem*, where the same passages from the *Symposium* are mentioned in order to emphasize that Epicurus' statements are nothing more than a resumption of the formula (typically Democritean and Pyrrhonian) of the *ouden mallon*, of the fact that no statement can be made about a thing with certainty and that nothing is more a thing than its opposite. Clearly, therefore, Pyrrhonism is configured in the eyes of Plutarch as a form of radical skepticism, according to which we cannot say anything certain due to constant changes in our cognitive relationship with reality. But as is clear from a joint reading of *Adversus Colotem* and *Quaestiones convivales*, the connection between Epicurus and Pyrrho is not superficial but structural. Plutarch's thesis is in fact that Epicureanism is inevitably condemned to become Pyrrhonism, because the latter's position is the ineluctable outcome of any empiricist philosophy. Any philosophy that is founded only on sensory experiences cannot but result in a philosophy of *ouden mallon*. For Plutarch therefore, Pyrrhonism is a form of radical skepticism that derives from its empirical approach, from its clinging only to the material aspect of reality, to sensible appearances. It is on the basis of this common empirical approach that it is possible to combine two apparently divergent philosophies such as Pyrrhonism and Epicureanism. In other words, radical skepticism (Pyrrhonism) is simply the inevitable consequence of empiricism (or of Epicureanism).

Given this interpretation of Pyrrhonism, it is easy to imagine why Plutarch had insisted on the differences between this movement and the philosophy of the Hellenistic Academy. Again it is the polemic against Epicureanism that clarifies Plutarch's position. Because if skepticism is the necessary consequence of empiricism, it is evident that it cannot be attributed to the Hellenistic Academy, which notably took part in the battle against empiricism. In fact, this is the line of argumentation adopted by Plutarch in his *Adversus Colotem*, in the celebrated and controversial section dedicated to Arcesilaus, who was the first and most radical supporter of the skeptical movement within the Academy.¹² In the text of Colotes we find a discussion of the standard accusation of *apraxia* that is traditionally directed against any form of skepticism: by inviting us not to put faith in perceptions the skeptic Arcesilaus is accused of making life impossible to live.¹³ But this accusation is rejected and even overturned against Colotes and Epicureanism: it is not the Academy that renders life impossible, but the absurd Epicurean doctrine that commands us to accept as true all of the perceptions that consequently throw us into confusion and make it no longer possible to say anything about reality. Significantly, but not by accident, Plutarch also presents in this case the Epicurean position using terms typical of the Pyrrhonian tradition (*aphasia*, *isotes*), again virtually identifying the two schools. This allows him to downplay the alleged skepticism of Arcesilaus. In fact, Arcesilaus is the philosopher who knew better than others how to guard against this risk, in urging us not to put excessive faith in sensory experience. This therefore clarifies the meaning of the famous theory of *epoche*: *epoche*, the suspension of judgment, is the most valuable instrument in the defense against absurd Epicurean doctrines. Or

better yet, *epoche* is a consequence of the doctrines of the Epicureans, and indeed the Epicureans should have been the first to adopt it:

And if it is possible to withhold judgment about these sensations, it is not impossible to withhold it about others as well, *at least on the principles of your school*, who set one act or image of sensation on exactly the same footing as another. (1124a–b)

This underscoring of the dialectical and not absolute character of *epoche* is very important and should not be underestimated: the suspension of judgment must not be understood as a doctrine (*dogma*) of Arcesilaus, but rather as a reaction to the sensism of the Epicureans: the choice of *epoche* is the response to the extreme position of accepting every sensation as real; in this sense it constitutes in Plutarch's eyes a formidable polemical instrument against any empiricist epistemology. If this is known, due attention has not been given to the fact that, with regard to both Arcesilaus and the Academy, Plutarch was also able to attribute a different, more moderate value to *epoche*.¹⁴ If *epoche* is the outcome to which empiricists are condemned, for someone who is not an empiricist it serves instead as a confirmation and indication that it is not necessary to seek in sensory experience a certainty that sensations cannot give:

And so this doctrine of withholding judgments is no idle tale, as Colotes thinks, [...]; it is a settled state and attitude of grown men that preserves from error and refuses to abandon judgment to anything so discredited and incoherent as the senses or to be deluded as these people are deluded who call the seen the evidence of things unseen although they observe that appearances are so untrustworthy and ambiguous. (*Adv. Col.* 1124b)

Epoche is the tool that prevents the establishment of judgment (*krisin*: in using this term it is not unsafe to see an allusion to the more technical term "*kriterion*," which also derives from the same root) on the uncertain bases of sensible phenomena, as the Epicureans do. It is in this more moderate sense that *epoche* exists at the heart of the Academy. One can certainly question the legitimacy of Arcesilaus' reconstruction, but one cannot deny that his strategy does not lack a certain intelligence and brilliance. And his argumentation becomes even more interesting, if one considers that his defense of the Academy is not limited to highlighting the anti-empiricist formulation.

Indeed, one could observe that the defense of the Academy proposed by Plutarch, though not lacking in his own interests, risks being reduced to "a modest affair."¹⁵ For it is true that a critical position against empiricism implies an affinity with the philosophy of Plato, but it is however no less true that anti-empiricism is also common to other philosophies, some of which are defended by Plutarch himself in the *Adversus Colotem*, but which have little to do with Plato. Yet Plutarch himself must have been aware of this, and in fact in his discussion of Arcesilaus another element of fundamental importance also appears. The distance that separates Arcesilaus from radical skepticism (Pyrrhonian and Epicurean) does not consist solely in an epistemological position, but also presupposes a different ontology. The position of the Academy becomes clear, in its carrying to extreme (and absurd) consequences the position of the empiricists: the empiricists make knowledge impossible because they adhere only to the senses, and from the senses we get a picture of reality as something completely confused, devoid of order and stability. But reality is more complex than that which the Epicureans and Pyrrhonians presumed: it is not completely

crazy (*ouk hygies*, 1123f), but uncertain (*asaphes*, 1123f, 1124b).¹⁶ Indeed, it would be completely crazy, if the Epicurean account were correct; for the conflict of sensory impressions would indicate that the world is reduced to an aggregate of qualities without any unity. But that it is not the case, as the fact itself that we live confirms. Reality is rather uncertain for it is made up of disorderly and orderly constituents. And since it has been shown that the disorderly constituents are the sensible ones, it follows that the orderly ones are the non-sensible, that is – in Plutarch's Platonist jargon – the intelligible. And it is exactly this position that is assumed in the case of Arcesilaus, who does not negate the possibility of living or support the idea that reality is completely crazy. On the contrary, Arcesilaus' position becomes clear from the point of view of the dualist assumption: if Arcesilaus denies that the senses permit us to reach knowledge but denies that reality is only chaos, it is because he thinks, evidently, that reality cannot be reduced only to the sensible dimension. His position, therefore, does not simply resolve itself in an anti-empiricism, but also implies an openness to a metaphysical dualism.

Admittedly, Plutarch does not attribute this position explicitly to Arcesilaus: but to this objection one could counter that the principal aim of the *Adversus Colotem* was the defense of many philosophers unjustly attacked by Colotes; it was, moreover, a polemic directed at Epicureanism, not a discussion about Platonic dualism. Furthermore, and this is a decisive aspect of the discussion of Plutarch, one should not underestimate the fact that Plutarch, while not explicitly attributing this position to Arcesilaus, nonetheless considers it established from a historical point of view. Indeed, at the beginning of the discussion Plutarch remembers a critical observation by Colotes and employs it with great skill to further his objectives:

But so far was Arcesilaus from cherishing any reputation or laying claim to any ancient doctrine as his own, that the sophists of his days accused him of foisting his own views about the suspension of judgment and the impossibility of infallible apprehension on Socrates, Plato, Parmenides, and Heraclitus, who had precious little need of such a gloss; but Arcesilaus wished to certify his views, as it were, by this appeal to highly respected names. So for his sake we are thankful to Colotes and to anyone who shows that the Academic reasoning came to Arcesilaus as an ancient tradition. (1121f–1122a)

Colotes had resumed a critique of Arcesilaus by some contemporary philosophers who had accused him of copying doctrines already produced by others. Far from being invoked as a criticism, loyalty to tradition is a source of praise for Plutarch that confirms Arcesilaus' link to the best Greek tradition, a tradition that had Plato at his core. But in what sense is it necessary to understand the statement that *epoche* and *akatalepsia* lead back to these doctrines? In order to respond to this question, it is crucial to consider what it is, according to Plutarch, that links together the four philosophers mentioned – Plato, Socrates, Parmenides, Heraclitus. What connects them is a dualist approach. This emerges clearly in the discussion of Parmenides and Plato (and also of Socrates), and this is what we get elsewhere on Heraclitus.¹⁷ The real bond between Arcesilaus and these philosophers, who are at the heart of the Platonic tradition, consists not merely in their caution regarding sensation, but in what this caution implies, an openness toward the intelligible and divine dimension. While the skepticism of the Pyrrhonists can be defined as an empiricist skepticism, that of Arcesilaus could instead be understood as a metaphysical skepticism,¹⁸ which has almost nothing to do with Pyrrhonist skepticism,

but instead allows one to include him fully in the Platonic tradition. This was probably the line of argument followed by Plutarch in order to defend his ideas on the difference between the Academicians and the Pyrrhonists, and on the unity of the Academy.

2. Plutarch and Knowledge of the Sensory World

The key is a metaphysical dualism, attributed implicitly to Arcesilaus and expressly to Parmenides, Socrates, and Plato, that allows us to interpret the personal positions of Plutarch with reference to the sensible world as well as the intelligible one. We begin with the first problem, and with a series of statements that have motivated not a few scholars to defend the thesis that Plutarch was a skeptic. In Plutarch's essays and dialogues a number of passages seem to indicate that he fully adhered to the skepticism of the Hellenistic Academy, denying that it was possible to know reality and consequently leading to the suspension of judgment. One may cite as an example a case from *De facie*, in which the explanation of the muddy nature of the moon and its spots is never defended as true theory (922f–923a). Additionally, in an analogous way, we are reminded of the *De defectu oraculorum* in which Lamprias, the brother of Plutarch, first argued in favor of the thesis that the number of worlds is five (in agreement with *Timaeus* 55c–d), but then emphasizes that he does not want to attribute too much certainty to this conclusion (*to agan tes pisteos*, 430e–431a).¹⁹ But it is, above all, the famous and conclusive passage in the *De primo frigido* that has attracted the attention of scholars:

“Compare these statements, Favorinus, with the pronouncements of others: and if these notions of mine are neither less probable nor much more plausible than those of others, say farewell to dogma, being convinced as you are that it is more philosophic to suspend judgment (*to epechein*) when the truth is obscure than to take sides.” (955a)

There is a strong temptation to consider Plutarch, at least in this passage, as none other than an heir to Academic skepticism. But these similarities should not hide the differences. First of all, it should be noted that all these professions of caution do not apply indiscriminately to the world of the senses but concern, rather, a claim to scientific knowledge. Second, it is especially necessary to consider that Plutarch's doubts and caution do not depend only on the limits of sense-perception²⁰ but on the knowledge of the “metaphysician who knows he cannot leave it to science alone to solve problems that have a foundation or an outcome in the sphere of the intelligible and the divine.”²¹ This aspect becomes particularly clear if one concentrates on the text that is apparently more inclined toward skepticism, the *De primo frigido*. The suspension of belief to which Plutarch invites his friend Favorinus is not valid in an absolute sense, but eventually only concerns the sensible world. This is what explains the task of the true philosopher, which consists in promoting a return to intelligible principles, principles that are the real constituents of reality, the elementary triangles mentioned in the *Timaeus* (948c) and “god as musician and harmonizer” (946f). Significantly, a similar argument also applies to the other texts first mentioned.²² A close reading of the *De primo frigido* reveals that Plutarch maintains in the first person (and in the other passages refers to individuals who share his opinions) the same theses that he had attributed to Arcesilaus in the polemic

against Colotes. And these positions are identical only in appearance to those that we attribute today to the skeptic Academics: the epistemological caution with regard to sensible reality also implies a dualist ontology. The reality in which we live, this is Plutarch's lesson, consists of sensible and intelligible elements; it is not therefore perfectly ordered and fully recognizable, neither is it all chaotic and obscure. This idea appears clearly when Plutarch reexamines a famous debate of the Hellenistic period, the one on the flux of reality and the view that reality is continuously changing. Here again the differences between Plutarch and the Hellenistic Academics are no less important than their similarities: both Plutarch and the Academics use this argument against the materialists, but unlike the Academics who always argue in the dialectical sense (maintaining that the thesis of flux is the consequence of the doctrines of materialist philosophers like the Stoics), Plutarch adopts this theory *in propria persona*.²³ For Plutarch maintains that the chaotic movement of matter constitutes only one part of reality: no less important are the principles of order that guarantee a certain coherence and stability of things.²⁴ Reality is the product of the interaction of these two principles: as is affirmed in the *Adversus Colotem*, it is not crazy (1123f., as it appears to be; instead one has to admit this if he endorses the Epicurean theses), but uncertain (1123f, 1124b).

Plutarch's epistemology is strictly linked to this dualistic ontology. To adopt Plato's vocabulary, ours is the world of *genesis* but not of the true being (*einai*), and from it we get *doxa* but not *episteme*.²⁵ Therefore, in the measure in which it is considered in its sensible aspect, reality cannot be an object of certain knowledge but, rather, only probable or plausible.²⁶ This has undoubtedly some affinities with the Academy and in particular with the fallibility thesis of Philo of Larissa. But, differently from Philo, reason does not depend on the incapacity of the senses in discriminating between true and false representations but, rather, as has already been observed, on the knowledge that a sufficient comprehension of reality cannot be reduced to the mere analysis of the sensible components but must have due regard to the intelligible level.²⁷ Here the limits of the senses are explained: they are unable to correctly account for reality in its complexity.²⁸

But what can we say then of the intelligible dimension? Is it possible to know it perfectly? This problem is clearly crucial for determining whether one can speak of Plutarch more or less as a skeptic: for if the intelligible principles are recognizable and knowledge of them is consequently capable of explaining reality in its entirety, it is clear that Plutarch's skepticism would turn out to be a marginal aspect of his thought; while everything changes if the intelligible principles also are placed in doubt (if not their existence, then at least their knowability). It is this problem that must be examined.

3. Plutarch and Knowledge of the Intelligible and Divine World

If one concentrates on Plutarch's more metaphysical treatises, the answer seems clear: texts such as the *De animae procreatione* or the *De Iside et Osiride* describe with great clarity the dualistic structure of reality, without any hesitations or doubts.²⁹ On several occasions reality is divided into two ontological realms, the sensible and the intelligible. The essential characteristics of the latter are thus emphasized: the connection between intelligible being and God, and the fundamental characteristics of God (eternal, generated, incorruptible,

immutable) are underlined.³⁰ Moreover, Plutarch is also concerned to explain how, through the mediation of mathematical entities, the sensible world can participate in this perfection, gaining as much as possible in order and harmony.³¹ The conclusion would seem to be, therefore, that for Plutarch the object of knowledge is not only intelligible reality but also sensible reality, at least insofar as it is able to reveal the principles of order. This seems to sweep aside any sympathy with skepticism, which would really be relegated to a marginal role in his philosophical system. But this is too schematic a presentation that does not account for the complexity of Plutarch's thought, either on the intelligible world or on the sensible world, or the interaction between the two.

As regards knowledge of the sensible world, the problems that impede full knowledge have already been recognized: the preceding analysis has shown that knowledge of sensible reality is uncertain and incomplete. Uncertain, because not even intelligible knowledge can render a proper account of its material and changeable aspect: strictly speaking, sensory reality can never be the subject of exact knowledge.³² Moreover, even considered by itself, knowledge of its immanent principles of order is not sufficient but must be integrated with sufficient knowledge of the divine and transcendent world. One thinks, for example, of the problem of elementary triangles in the *De primo frigido*: it is correct to reduce the sensation of cold to its elementary principles (948c), but a complete analysis of these principles is not enough to guarantee sufficient knowledge of reality, because it is necessary also to take into consideration the divine and intelligible principles, which go beyond the physical treatment. In this sense one can thus talk of a knowledge that is always incomplete.³³

However, it does not only deal with this. The problem becomes more complex if one considers that Plutarch also raises doubts about knowledge of the divine and transcendent plan, the true intelligible plan of being: if in the previously cited passages Plutarch seems to express himself without doubts about intelligible reality, in other cases one reads rather an invitation to caution, circumspection, and balance, as if an exhaustive knowledge were inaccessible to man.

Among all of the passages, the most significant appears at the beginning of the *De sera*, in reference to the delicate problem of divine providence:

First, then, beginning as from our ancestral hearth with the scrupulous reverence of the philosophers of the Academy for the Deity we shall disavow any pretension to speak about these matters from knowledge. For it is presumptuous enough for those untrained in music to speak about things musical [...]; but it is more presumptuous for mere human beings like ourselves to inquire into the concerns of gods and daemons, where we like laymen seeking to follow the thought of experts by the guesswork of opinion and imputation. (*De sera* 549e–f)

Even later in the text, Plutarch reiterates the need for caution when speaking of God, contenting himself with finding what is plausible and convincing (558d).³⁴ No less meaningful is what one reads then in a few programmatic passages from the *De Is. et Os.* and the *De E*, two texts that are usually considered as proof of Plutarch's metaphysical-dogmatic inclinations: if at the beginning of the *De Is.* it is affirmed that man never attains full awareness of the divine (but only "as much as is possible," 351c), in the pages of the *De E* (and in particular in the discourses of Ammonius) the accent is always on the search for truth and not on its possession.³⁵ Undoubtedly, these are important statements. For if it is not possible to have true knowledge either of the divine and intelligible world, the

perfect world of that which truly exists, and if what we can know of it is only plausible and persuasive, then it is evident that the skeptical interpretation of Plutarch regains power.

The problem, then, is not easily resolved, and there is a strong temptation to criticize Plutarch for his incoherence and contradictions. But these criticisms are perhaps excessive in that they at least partly depend on an anachronistic need to adapt Plutarch's thought to our conceptual categories. For us, skepticism consists substantially in adherence to an epistemology that implies distancing oneself from the possibility of saying anything certain about reality. For Plutarch, it is in fact the opposite: it is his ontological, dualist, and metaphysical theories that ground his epistemological statements. And this enables us to find, if not coherence, then at least continuity in his thought. The analysis of reality, of its parts and ordering principles, has allowed us to verify a complex structure, articulated on two levels, one that is intelligible, perfect, divine, transcendent, and the other sensible and imperfect. Now, the decisive point is that men are relegated only to the second level and have only partial access to the first. Thanks to their intelligence they are able to go beyond sensory appearance and thus acquire a proper understanding of the complexity of reality – comprehending, not only in a negative way, that reality cannot be reduced to its sensory dimension only, but also in a positive way which are the characteristics of the intelligible and divine dimension. This is never an object of doubt. On the other hand, one can never express this certainty definitively because the intelligible and divine realities elude full understanding. Thus we witness the constant oscillation between dogmatic statements, expressions of caution, and skepticism about human cognitive ability.

The basis of Plutarch's apparent oscillations is, therefore, the awareness of this difference between the divine world of perfect being and the human world of becoming: therein lies the key to understanding his thought. How in fact should we evaluate this conviction of Plutarch? In some important studies Daniel Babut has reconstructed Plutarch's intellectual journey in a way that seems to anticipate the fideism of modern times: reason and human reasoning serve to point out the limits of human knowledge, producing an impasse from which one can only exit with faith (*pistis, croyance religieuse*).³⁶ But this interpretation is difficult to share, because the opposition between faith and reason does not seem to exist in Plutarch.³⁷ The most reasonable solution is quite the opposite: one must speak, not of an opposition between belief and reason, but of an alliance, so that rational investigation reveals that reality opens the way for a discovery of the divine elements that compose it, and the belief in the divine character thereby acquired serves as a stimulus for further research, albeit in the acknowledgment that the divide between man and God can never be ultimately bridged.³⁸ So it is a question neither of the pretense of telling the absolute truth nor even of its impossibility; rather, it is a matter of agreeing to speak of a truth, but recognizing it as limited or, better, asymptotic to the extent that it cannot exhaust the infinite richness of the problem of divinity and the knowledge of divinity. The truth about divinity and intelligible realities cannot ever be fully objective, but always only subjective. Or rather – though it may seem strange to the ears of many contemporary philosophers – it is not a mathematical truth (as the young Plutarch believed in *De E* 387f) but a devotional truth, one that in the same moment it affirms something carries with it the recognition of its own weakness, of human weakness as opposed to divine power.³⁹ For those who regard philosophy as if it were an exact and rigorous science, the typical Plutarchan tension between knowing and not knowing, dogmatism and skepticism, can also seem simply confused. But it is not at all certain that such people would be able to provide a fuller picture of reality and its problems.

4. Platonism and Skepticism

In conclusion, then, what can we say about Plutarch's skepticism? A first problem, as we have seen, concerns the Hellenistic Academy: in a nutshell, one could define Plutarch's philosophy as a Platonizing interpretation of the Hellenistic Academy,⁴⁰ whose aim is to show that the latter tradition also finds a legitimate place in the more extended Academic tradition that began with Plato, and in which Plutarch himself participated. After all, as Pierluigi Donini rightly observed, all the opinions that Plutarch ascribes to the Academy accurately reflect views encountered in Plato's dialogues, and in the *Timaeus* in particular.⁴¹

This interpretation not only has historical value but is also essential to understanding the coordinates of Plutarchan philosophy, because the relationship with skepticism, even without transforming Plutarch into a skeptic, nevertheless plays an important role in his ontological, epistemological, and, above all, anthropological views. To the extent that it is readapted in the context of metaphysical dualism, skepticism provides important tools for Plutarch to clarify his conception of man, and of human weakness as opposed to divine perfection. This is a key point for Plutarch, because knowledge of oneself, what is human, is in turn necessary to live well and to help others to live well. This is the fundamental task of philosophy, and to the extent that it contributes to this end, the Hellenistic Academy, in Plutarch's eyes, also deserves our respect.

NOTES

- 1 The main studies in this regard are Babut (1994) and (2007), Bonazzi (2003) and (2012), Boys-Stones (1997), Brittain (2001) 225–236, De Lacy (1953), Donini (1986) and (2003), Ferrari (2005), Glucker (1978), Opsomer (1998) and (2005), Schroeter (1911).
- 2 The two most interesting examples before and after Plutarch are Antiochus (cf. e.g. Cic. *Luc.* 15) and Numenius (fr. 24–28 Des Places from a work entitled *On the Defection of the Academy from Plato*). Significantly, this is the line of thinking that would dominate the centuries, as shown by Proclus, who represented the Hellenistic centuries as the “dark ages” in his history of Platonism, cf. *Theol. Plat.* 1.1.
- 3 As far as we know, only one other Platonist advocated a position similar to Plutarch's, the anonymous author of a commentary of the *Theatetus*, cf. Sedley (1995) and Bonazzi (2003) 179–211. Sympathy for Academic skepticism is found also in Ammonius, in whose “Academy” Plutarch was educated (*De E* 387e); cf. now Opsomer (2009).
- 4 Cf. e.g. Dillon (1999) 355.
- 5 Cf. Schroeter (1911) 1, 5, 41, who hypothesizes a gradual shift toward dogmatism from an initial adherence to skepticism, or, conversely, Glucker (1978) 270 nn. 45 and 276, who envisions an evolution in the opposite direction from dogmatism to skepticism.
- 6 Babut (1994) and (2007).
- 7 Certainly, from the early Imperial period, *skeptikos* began to be understood in the technical sense of “skeptical” (cf. Decleva Caizzi (1992)). But it is easy to observe that *skeptikos* can also be used in a broader sense. After all, *skeptikos* is formed on the root of *skepsis*, which means research: and all philosophers, even the most dogmatic, would be ready to recognize the importance of *skepsis*. The occurrences of the term in Plutarch seem to confirm this more general meaning.
- 8 In the Lamprias Catalogue there appear many other titles dedicated to the Academy or skepticism. About the Academy, cf. *CL* 45 (*On Arguing Both Sides of a Question*), 71 (*That*

the Academic Philosophy Allows for the Reality of Prophecy), 131 (*On the Fact that there is no Conflict between the Principles of the Academy and the Art of Prophecy*), 134 (*Academic Lectures*), 146 (*That Understanding is Impossible*), 210 (*Whether Suspending Judgment on Everything Involves Inaction*), 225 (*How Should We Judge Truth?*). As for Pyrrhonism, cf. CL 158, *On Pyrrho's Ten Tropes*: if authentic, it would further confirm Plutarch's acquaintance with Aenesidemian Pyrrhonism, cf. Babut (1994) 566 n. 99.

- 9 Opsomer (1998) 173.
- 10 All translations are from the Loeb edition, with some modifications.
- 11 For a more detailed analysis, see Bonazzi (2012).
- 12 In fact, it is commonly believed among modern scholars that it was Carneades who professed the most radical form of skepticism in the Academy. Although correct, however, this statement does not correctly describe the ideas of Plutarch and many other ancient thinkers, who, thanks to the interpretation of Metrodorus and Philo of Larissa, endorsed a more moderate, "probabilistic" interpretation of Carneades. This was not the case for Arcesilaus, as confirmed for instance by Sextus Empiricus, who does not hesitate to criticize Carneades, while he shows interest for the skepticism of Arcesilaus (cf. *PH* 232–234; cf. also Num. fr. 25, 67–75 Des Places on Mnaseas, Philomelus, and Timon).
- 13 For space reasons, and because it does not directly concern the subject of this chapter, I will not dwell on the value of this passage for the interpretation of Arcesilaus, an issue hotly debated by modern scholars; in addition to Vander Waerdt (1989), cf. Opsomer (1998) 91–92; Lévy (1993) 267; Ioppolo (2000) and (2004).
- 14 For a more detailed discussion, refer to Bonazzi (2004); cf. also Brittain (2007) 306.
- 15 Brittain (2001) 236.
- 16 Cf. *Adv. Col.* 1123e: "Is that not reason enough to make us regard the world about us with suspicion, – not that we actually take it to be completely crazy, but only conclude that there is no end to the doubt and confusion that it begets?"
- 17 Regarding Parmenides, cf. *Adv. Col.* 1114c–d; regarding Plato, 1114f, 1115d–f; on Socrates cf. *Adv. Col.* 1118b with Warren (2002) 351–352; more generally, see Isnardi Parente (1988). On Heraclitus, cf. *De Is. et Os.* 45–48; *De anim. procr.* 1026a–b; *De soll. an.* 964d with Bonazzi (2013) and (2014); more generally on the structure of Plutarch's treatise see now Kechagia (2011).
- 18 Cf. Donini (1986) 213.
- 19 Cf. also *Quaest. conv.* 698d–700a.
- 20 Cf., in reference to the anti-Stoic and anti-Epicurean polemics, *Comm. not.* 1058f, 1070c; *Adv. Col.* 1120c, 1122a; cf. also *De prim. frig.* 952a, 955a.
- 21 Donini (1986) 213, followed by Opsomer (1998) 216–217.
- 22 In both the *De fac.* and *De def. or.*, one of the reasons that urges caution about the solution proposed is that they do not adequately take into account the divine aspects and metaphysical problems; cf. *De fac.* 935c; *De def. or.* 430d–e with Donini (1986) 206–208.
- 23 Cf. *De tranq. an.* 473d; *De sera* 559a–c with Decleva Caizzi (1988) 452–453 n. 27; in the case of *De E* 392a–b, which endorses a more radical opposition between being and becoming, the rhetorical aim of stressing the difference between God and men need not be neglected.
- 24 More specifically, the mediation of mathematical entities should not be neglected; cf. Ferrari (1995) 70.
- 25 Cf. e.g. *Adv. Col.* 1114c–d, 1118c.
- 26 And not just in the *De fac.* or *De def. or.* Also on the *De prim. frigid.*, it was hypothesized that Plutarch's conclusion does not go in the direction of the *epoche*. On the contrary, one could think that "he has so set things up that it is hard to resist the conclusion that plausibility in this matter is on the side of earth" (Boys-Stones (1997) 238). That is the Platonic solution.

But against this hypothesis it is observed that for 948c Plato is praised truly for not just standing still with regards to sensible things.

- 27 On Philo and Plutarch, cf. Boys-Stones (1997) 230–231.
- 28 Cf. e.g. *De E* 392e and *Adv. Col.* 1118b with Isnardi Parente (1988) 76.
- 29 The most complete and convincing analysis remains that of Ferrari (1995).
- 30 Cf. e.g. *De E* 392c, 393c–394a.
- 31 Cf. e.g. Ferrari (1995) 115–147.
- 32 Babut (1994) 572, followed partially by Donini (2002) 272 n. 103. A proper discussion of these issues should also take into account the way in which Plutarch appropriates the Stoic *koinai ennoiai*, too complicated an issue to be discussed on this occasion; cf. fr. 215 and *Quaest. Plat.* I, 1000d, with the observations of Brittain (2007) 309 and Donini (2002) 257–258.
- 33 Donini (1986) 213. This point is important in order to clarify the terms of a debate between Donini (1986) on one side and Babut (1994) 570 and Opsomer (1998) 218 on the other. Contrary to what Babut and Opsomer affirm, from Donini's position it does not follow that criticism of the senses (of Hellenistic-Academic origin) and metaphysical criticism (of Platonic origin) are incompatible. Clearly the first type of criticism is important for Plutarch; but no less true is that it is adapted to the dualistic doctrine.
- 34 Cf. also *De def. or.* 431a.
- 35 Cf. Bonazzi (2008).
- 36 Babut (1994) 578.
- 37 Cf. Frazier (2008); Donini (2002) 259.
- 38 Cf. e.g. *De Is. et Os.* 382d–e.
- 39 Cf. *De E* 394c with Bonazzi (2008) 208.
- 40 As in Bonazzi (2003) 232–236, following Donini (1986), in opposition to Babut (1994) 535 (cf. also the important remarks of Babut (2007) 81 n. 53), and Opsomer (1998) 220–221.
- 41 Cf. in particular Donini (2002).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Opsomer (1998) provides a lively and accessible introduction for readers approaching the subject for the first time. The case for Plutarch's skepticism is forcefully argued in Babut (1994), whose conclusions, however, need to be qualified; cf. Donini (2002) and Bonazzi (2012). Still valuable as introductions to Greek skepticism are Brochard (1887) and Hankinson (1995) (who mentions Plutarch only in passing).

CHAPTER 9

Practical Ethics

Lieve Van Hoof

One of the most burgeoning departments in many high-street bookstores is the section that comes under labels such as meditation, self-help, or spiritual health. Amongst today's reading public, many indeed are in search of advice on how to reach happiness, realize their ambitions, or relax from their multifarious duties causing stress. Yoga, mindfulness, and psychotherapy all offer possible answers, with some advisors such as Gerda Alexander (eutony, 1980s), Jon Kabat-Zinn (mindfulness, 1990s), and Sherry Gaba (psychotherapy, 2000s) having seen their book sales rise so dramatically that they have become minor celebrities known to many from television. The most efficient publicity for self-help books and methods, however, comes from the "real" celebrities of our time, with Madonna ascribing her good shape to ashtanga yoga, Oprah Winfrey swearing by mindfulness, and Britney Spears having had to go into psychotherapy.

Probably the closest ancient equivalent to such self-help can be found in the practical ethics of Plutarch. This group of twenty-five or so writings addresses similar problems caused by stress and ambition, gives guidance that ranges from health care over psychotherapy to professional advice, and targets some of the great celebrities of Plutarch's times such as prince Philopappus, consul Minicius Fundanus, and suffect consul and Stoic philosopher Rusticus, who would be executed by Domitian. Yet whilst the age-old teachings of Buddha are firmly on the up in today's Western world, Plutarch's practical ethics are still waiting to be revived: not only are they generally unknown to the public at large, until recently they were also largely neglected by scholars. The explanation for this situation lies with a certain academic disdain for the "popularizing" advice offered in these writings: like contemporary self-help books, Plutarch's practical ethics are not written for professionals, but first and foremost for the general reading public.

Precisely the fact that they target such a public, with their aims and strategies being adapted accordingly, not only makes these writings often a pleasure to read, even for the

non-specialist in ancient philosophy, but also offers unique insight into the socio-historical embedding of ancient philosophy. As such, they show the full expanse of Plutarch's styles and talents as a writer and philosopher, and lead us to rethink his relationship with the Second Sophistic. All these aspects will be touched upon in this chapter. By way of background to this fresh look at Plutarch's practical ethics, I first present some of the most important research that has already been carried out. In the second section, I give a survey of the scope of this group of writings, followed in the third section by a discussion of their principal strategies and characteristics. In the final section, I briefly reflect upon the consequences of all this for our assessment of Plutarch as a philosopher.

1. Foundational Research

The basis for modern research into Plutarch's practical ethics was laid by Konrat Ziegler. First published as a monograph, his 1951 *Realencyclopädie* article distinguished what he called Plutarch's *Popularphilosophie* ("popular philosophy") from his technical philosophy and other works. With this term, Ziegler referred to an eighteenth-century current in German philosophy that believed in, and worked toward, the improvement of humankind through philosophical enlightenment. Although it had a parallel in the French *philosophes*, this practical concept of philosophy was soon criticized by eminent philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), who coined the term *Popularphilosophie* to express this unfavorable opinion. By applying this derogatory term to Plutarch's practical ethics, Ziegler unwittingly brought to bear on them its negative connotations, which may well have contributed to the relative neglect, for many decades, of these writings by philosophical scholars. Otherwise, Ziegler offers a still useful survey both of the contents of the individual writings that fall under this heading, and of the research done on them between the end of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth centuries (Ziegler (1951) 768–825). The vast majority of these earlier studies examine Plutarch's sources in writing these texts (so-called *Quellenforschung*). Focusing on repetitions or perceived inconsistencies within Plutarch's texts, which they ascribed to the author's clumsiness in bringing together different sources, scholars detected above all Platonic–Peripatetic, but also Stoic influences. In his systematic study on Plutarch and Stoicism, Daniel Babut (1969) rightly warned that the presence of Stoic elements in some of these writings cannot be taken as a sign that Plutarch would be defending a Stoic point of view: Stoic elements, when present, are integrated into a largely Platonic–Peripatetic discourse. More recently, both the Italian and the Spanish sections of the International Plutarch Society have organized conferences focusing on Plutarch's philosophical affiliations, including discussions of the practical ethics (cf. Gallo (1988); Pérez Jiménez, García López, and Aguilar (1999)).

Another milestone in research into Plutarch's practical ethics is Heinz-Gerd Ingenkamp's 1971 study of what he terms Plutarch's psychotherapeutic writings: *On the Control of Anger*, *On Talkativeness*, *On Curiosity*, *On Compliance*, and *On Praising Oneself Inoffensively*. In the first part of his book, Ingenkamp offers a detailed, almost sentence-by-sentence analysis of the way in which Plutarch builds up his arguments. Ring compositions, which earlier scholars had taken as signs of a clumsy use of sources because of the repetitions inherent in them, turn out to be fundamental building blocks

in Plutarch's argumentation. Some thirty years later, Ingenkamp (2011) offered a valuable addition to this by analyzing the way in which Plutarch introduces new arguments: these are often preceded by "springboards," arguments which do not always show a clear connection with their immediate context but whose main function is to provide an impetus to an important point the author wants to make. *Reculer pour mieux sauter*, in other words. In the second part of his 1971 study, Ingenkamp examines Plutarch's contribution to ancient psychotherapy. Methodologically, Plutarch's psychotherapy falls apart in the condemnation of the emotion under examination in each text on the one hand, and various kinds of exercises against it on the other. Thematically, the emotions selected for treatment have parallels in other ancient authors, but also form a unity within Plutarch's philosophical output in that they all stem, ultimately, from self-love (*philautia*).

About a decade later, Damianos Tsekourakis (1983), in a study published in his native modern Greek and therefore not well known to many scholars, examined the relationship between Plutarch's popular-philosophical works and the Cynic–Stoic diatribe and similar genres, including declamations (*meletai*), lectures (*dialexeis*), and disputations (*scholai*). After drawing up a meticulous list of characteristics for these genres by themselves in the first two chapters, the third chapter turns to Plutarch's popular-philosophical writings. Measuring the language and style of *On Tranquility of Mind*, *On Exile*, and *On Love of Wealth* against the criteria set out in the earlier chapters, Tsekourakis concludes that these texts do exhibit some features common to diatribe, but cannot be classified as diatribes themselves. Instead, they come closer to being lectures or disputations. Due to the replacement of a static and fixed with a dynamic and flexible understanding of genre in literary criticism since the appearance of Tsekourakis' book, such strict classifications can, of course, no longer be held: rather than examine which predetermined – and thereby inevitably reductive – boxes Plutarch's texts tick, scholars of the twenty-first century are now examining these works in their own right, as texts that innovate by playing on conventions.

Between 1983 and 2010, no systematic study of Plutarch's practical ethics was undertaken. Since the 1960s, however, a great number of articles and conference papers were published that mostly discuss specific ideas in individual texts. Amongst these publications, two stand out. The first is Jones' 1966 seminal study of the chronology of Plutarch's works, which takes its starting point from the dates of *On the Control of Anger* (after 92 CE, probably before 100 CE) and *On Tranquility of Mind* (after 107 CE). Excluding traditional stylistic arguments, which described works of a certain style as juvenile, Jones assessed all the "hard evidence" and concluded that Plutarch was most productive as a writer in the last part of his life, from 96 CE onwards. The whole series of *Parallel Lives* dates from this period, and so does the majority of the practical ethics, with the practical ethics predominating in the earlier, the *Lives* in the later decades of this highly productive period. In addition, some of the practical ethics were written before 96 CE: the *Consolation to His Wife* was written between 85 and 95 CE, and some other texts too, such as *On Talkativeness*, *On Brotherly Love*, and *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* may have been written at a considerably earlier date. Plutarch thus seems to have made his name first as a writer of practical ethics.

The second contribution with far-reaching implications for the study of Plutarch's practical ethics is by Luc Van der Stockt. Researching the striking presence of recurring

material in Plutarch's oeuvre, he discovered that repeated elements often appear in "clusters," described as a repeated and structured collection of heterogeneous materials (Van der Stockt (1999) 580). These clusters, which represent Plutarch's own original selection and interpretation of anecdotes, sayings, and quotations he came across when reading, probably formed the basis of the notes (*hypomnēmata*) of which he says in *On Tranquility of Mind* 464F that he used them for the composition of his text. As such, they yield information not only on Plutarch's interests, but also on the relationship between the various texts that make up his writings. In a series of articles that have appeared since 1999, Van der Stockt has thus illuminated the connection between various works of practical ethics. In the future, it will be interesting to draw these separate threads together and see what Plutarch's clusters teach us about the unity of the corpus as a whole.

Building on these earlier strands of research, a monograph was published in 2010 under the title *Plutarch's Practical Ethics: The Social Dynamics of Philosophy* (Van Hoof (2010)). As the title makes clear, this monograph radically departs from the negative connotations associated with the label "popular philosophy," which implies an opposition to "technical philosophy" and thereby encourages measuring Plutarch's practical ethics against the standards of technical philosophy – alien standards which the practical ethics *do not wish* to meet. Indeed, these texts have a target audience and aim that set them apart from other Plutarchan works, which is summarized in the book's subtitle. Like Timothy Duff's 1999 book on the *Lives*, this monograph on the practical ethics provides an analytical framework as well as an interpretative synthesis, to be discussed below, that rehabilitates these texts and thereby hopes to encourage further research into them.

2. The Scope of the Practical Ethics

Before we turn to the characteristics that set the practical ethics apart from Plutarch's further literary output, it will be useful to have an idea of the scope of themes covered in them. Although no strict boundaries can or should be drawn within this group of writings, the following presentation broadly distinguishes three thematic groups, respectively revolving around the care for the self, relations with friends and family, and professional activities.

As far as the care for the self is concerned, *On Tranquility of Mind* can be considered the core treaty, in the sense that tranquility (*euthymia*) is the state of well-being that represents the pinnacle of emotional control advocated in the other texts in this thematic group. The text presents itself as a letter from Plutarch to his Roman friend Paccius, who has achieved worldly success but who keeps doubting whether he has chosen the right path of life. Plutarch's advice to him stresses that all career paths have positive as well as negative aspects, and that what matters is how one deals with them. An excellent study of some of the principal philosophical ideas of the text can be found in Gill (1994). Five texts zoom in on particular passions or emotions. Of these, *On the Control of Anger* is probably best known, not only because it discusses an emotion that plays a key role in many *Lives* as well, but also because of the liveliness achieved through its dialogical set-up: Fundanus, consul in 107 CE, and Sulla, his Roman friend from Carthage, discuss

how Fundanus has learned to manage his anger (*aorgêsia*). The account of his healing therapy is ingeniously presented so as to involve the reader step by step.

Two charming and at times funny treatises discuss the related vices of curiosity and talkativeness. In Plutarch's definition, curiosity (*polypragmosynê*) is the desire to discover other people's evils. Curious people spend, or rather lose, their time spying on their neighbors in order to discover their less glamorous or respectable side. As expected, they then spread around gossip, as Plutarch sets out in *On Talkativeness* (*adoleschia*). In this treatise, Plutarch also offers an explicit account of his therapeutic methodology, which, as we shall see in more detail below, consists of conviction and exercise. The companion piece *On Curiosity*, on the other hand, stands out through its almost schoolbook-like series of progressively more difficult exercises. Two other treatises deal with the surplus and the lack of self-confidence.

On Praising Oneself Inoffensively is addressed to the politically active Herculanus, and teaches him and other readers techniques for speaking about one's own achievements – as politicians (sometimes have to) do – without offending others. Mixing self-praise with praise for others, mixing it with self-criticism, and stressing the effort it took to achieve laudable results are but some of the solutions Plutarch proposes.

On Compliance deals with the opposite problem of excessive shame (*dysôpia*): it aims to help people who do not dare to speak up for themselves in the face of people whom they consider more powerful but who are often also more reckless than themselves. A series of exercises, starting with very simple ones such as refusing an invitation to go for a drink, teaches the reader to avoid concessions that will be detrimental to himself.

The final text in the group focuses on the care of the body. *Precepts of Health Care* is a dialogue in which the doctor Moschion is eager to hear from his friend Zeuxippus the thoughts on health held by their "companion." By having his ideas on medicine, which Plutarch was always very interested in (cf. Boulogne (1995)), approvingly cited by others, including a doctor, Plutarch conveys authority onto himself in a field that was heavily debated between doctors, philosophers, and athletic trainers.

A second group of texts amongst Plutarch's practical ethics focuses on the reader's relations with friends and family, and is often addressed to close friends or family members of Plutarch himself. A fine example is the discussion about friends (*philoî*) and flatterers (*kolakes*) with which Plutarch honored – or flattered? – prince Philopappus. Plutarch proposes litmus tests such as changing one's opinions and checking whether the would-be friend follows suit; but ultimately, as Tim Whitmarsh (2006) has shown, he may well be suggesting that the question is unsolvable, as is clear from the interrogative Greek title of the treatise *How Could You Tell a Flatterer from a Friend?* Two further treatises explore the themes of friendship and enmity. *On Having Many Friends* explains that since true friendship is built on virtue, company, and mutual help, it is impossible to be friends with many. It continues many of the discussions brought up in *How Could You Tell a Flatterer from a Friend?*, including special warnings for powerful men, who should not consider all their admirers to be friends. *How Could You Profit by Your Enemies?* also targets successful politicians, as represented by the letter's addressee Cornelius Pulcher, but advises them on how to deal with people who envy or dislike them: not only do their bad intentions incite us to prudence and their insults to self-control, but their reproaches also teach us what we can improve about ourselves.

Three other texts focus on family relations. Of these, *Precepts of Marriage*, a letter addressed by Plutarch to his students Pollianus and Eurydice at the occasion of their

wedding, is probably best known, especially since Michel Foucault's discussion of it within his *History of Sexuality*. The text offers advice on various aspects of married life under forty-eight separate chapters, and as Foucault ((1984) esp. 278) showed, favorably opposes marital love to pederasty. One of the most moving texts in Plutarch's oeuvre is the *Consolation to His Wife*, written at the occasion of the death of their daughter Timoxena. By praising his wife for her reactions to the event, Plutarch encourages her and others who find themselves in similar circumstances to self-control and restraint in grief. As such, this text applies the principles set out in *On Tranquility of Mind* to a specific situation. *On Brotherly Love*, finally, works in a similar way: it incites people to brotherly love by praising two brothers, Avidius Nigrinus and Quietus, for their relationship with one another. In all these writings, then, Plutarch and his friends and family serve as examples to be followed by a wider readership.

The last thematic group within Plutarch's practical ethics gives advice regarding various aspects of what could be called professional life. Two treatises concern student activities. *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* implicitly renounces Plato's rejection of poetry, and instead considers it a useful propaedeutic to philosophy. In order to fulfill this function, poetry should, however, be treated with great caution: the young man should learn to distill morally uplifting messages from works of poetry. Whilst *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry* is addressed to Sedatius, the father of a boy of the age at which they start to study poetry, *On Listening* is addressed to one of Plutarch's students, Nicander. It teaches him how to master his own behavior when listening to lectures now that he is becoming an adult and no longer under the supervision of a pedagogue. With recommendations such as to listen in silence, not to ask questions merely to show off one's own knowledge, and to assess the speaker's words critically, Plutarch straddles the boundary between ethics and etiquette. Two further writings in this group give financial advice. *On Love of Wealth* extols the riches of the soul over those of the purse: the desire for the latter is shown to be not just useless but also unfulfillable, as the one who loves wealth is not likely to make use of, and therefore enjoy, his wealth. *That One Ought Not to Borrow* warns against the dangers of borrowing money in order to keep up appearances. It aims, in other words, at elite rather than at popular borrowing, and as such addresses the same readership as the rest of Plutarch's practical ethics. Given that it targets predominantly Greeks borrowing from Roman lenders, it is an interesting socio-historical document as well.

The last five texts that fall within Plutarch's practical ethics deal with politics. *Political Precepts* is dedicated to Menemachus, a young citizen from Sardis at the beginning of his political career. It combines some rather general ethical advice – e.g. that the aim of a political career should be virtue, not ambition – with a large amount of practical advice on various aspects of the political life of a Greek politician under the Early Roman Empire. Special points of attention include the uses of rhetoric, the right middle course between leadership of the Greeks and obedience to the Romans, and the relationship of the politician to his citizens as well as his colleagues. In *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs*, Plutarch tries to convince his old friend Euphanes not to abandon the life he has always led. This is to the benefit not only of politics, which is in need of wise men, but also of elderly politicians themselves, as a change of life toward private and often trivial affairs or toward a life of pleasure would be shameful. On the other hand, the elderly politician should adapt his political behavior to his age: he should

not push himself forward to the detriment of his younger colleagues. Whilst this text thus contradicts those who might wish to abandon politics, *On Exile* aims at people who would love to be politically active but who have been cut off from politics by exile. Indeed, Plutarch's *On Exile* distinguishes itself from other treatments of the topic by its focus on the *political* aspects of exile. It suggests that the loss of political honor is the hardest aspect of exile, and seeks to counteract the grief caused by this by stressing the less glorious aspects of politics. The incomplete treatise *To an Uneducated Ruler* makes the point that people in powerful positions, although often unwilling to take advice, should give most heed to the philosopher. This will be to the benefit not only of the subjects they rule, but also of themselves, as power alone is not enough to disguise one's vices. An equally incomplete counterpart to this, *That a Philosopher Should Converse Especially with Men in Power* argues that a philosopher who gives advice to powerful politicians should not be accused of excessive ambition. On the contrary, by giving advice to the mighty, one benefits the whole of society which might otherwise suffer at their hands.

3. Characteristics of Plutarch's Practical Ethics

On the basis of the survey given in the previous section, it will be clear that Plutarch's practical ethics cover a wide range of topics. Nevertheless, several Plutarchan texts that cover the same or very similar topics have not been included in the list given above. The reason why writings such as *On Moral Virtue*, *How Could One Become Aware of One's Progress in Virtue*, or the *Dialogue on Love* have been left out is that these writings do not share in the aim and strategies that characterize Plutarch's practical ethics and thereby set them apart from the rest of his literary output. In what follows, I offer a discussion of the main characteristics of the practical ethics.¹ Examples are mostly taken from the first group of writings distinguished in the previous section, as the other two groups receive separate treatment in other chapters of this Companion. It should be stressed, however, that all the works of practical ethics listed in the previous section share, to various degrees and in different ways, in the following characteristics.

To start with, it is worthwhile to keep in mind the target readership of Plutarch's practical ethics. The most explicit references in this respect can be found in *Precepts of Health Care*, where Plutarch repeatedly states that he wrote the text for "men of letters and men in public life" (*philologoi kai politikoi*). Plutarch is writing, in other words, for a highly elite readership. This image is confirmed throughout the practical ethics, which not only contain numerous references to wealth – the possession of prize horses, the use of expensive tableware, the ownership of slaves, and so on – but also count on an educated public: when Plutarch brings up quotations from, or references to, literature, history, or philosophy, he does so in a way that presupposes the reader to be familiar with more than the basics of Greek culture and tradition. In addition, as stated in *Precepts of Health Care*, Plutarch's readers are often politically active: amongst the Greek and Roman dedicatees and addressees named in the previous section, not a few were indeed politicians, sometimes on a local or provincial, sometimes on an Imperial level. Conversely, none of the men addressed in the practical ethics is characterized as a philosopher.² Moreover, much effort is expended in these texts in convincing the readers that philosophy is something they too should care about – a protreptic function that would hardly make

sense for a target audience of philosophers. Plutarch's practical ethics, then, aim at a general, albeit highly elite, readership, rather than at philosophical specialists. The reason why it is important to take the target readership of Plutarch's practical ethics into account is that these model readers do not merely occur as addressees and dedicatees, but also *influence* Plutarch's texts: the practical ethics are, in other words, adapted to this elite, non-specialist target audience. The dietary advice given in *Precepts of Health Care*, for example, is not suited for laborers but for people who spend much of their time engaged in cultural and social activities; and *That One Ought Not to Borrow*, as we saw, does not deal with borrowing out of necessity but in view of keeping up appearances, often by Greeks from Roman creditors. As the latter example shows, Plutarch's practical ethics discuss specific challenges that elite Greeks and Romans may face in Imperial society. More specifically, the problems selected for treatment tend to derive from the tensions between individual ambitions and social expectations as they existed under the Roman Empire: people get angry because they feel they have not been given their due, they are unhappy in exile because it implies the loss of political honor, they are liable to flattery because that makes them feel important.

The problems discussed in Plutarch's practical ethics were, of course, not new. Nor was philosophical attention for them: many ancient philosophers, including Seneca, Musonius Rufus, and Epictetus in Plutarch's own lifetime, wrote about problems arising from their reader's social ambitions. Most of them sought to resolve such tensions by stressing that ambitions and social expectations are, ultimately, indifferent: since the only thing that truly matters is the moral improvement of the individual's soul, people should abandon their social ambitions and turn to philosophy instead. Plutarch's practical ethics take a very different stance: they explicitly deny that readers should choose a different kind of life (*bios*), exchanging their social values and political lives for a philosophical life of wisdom. This, of course, implies a wholly different equilibrium between philosophy and society: far from confronting the reader with the choice between either philosophy or society, Plutarch's practical ethics are designed to help the reader live the life of his own choice more successfully. What is necessary for this is not a change of life or a total reversal of values but a change in attitude (*diathesis*). This change toward a broadly philosophical way of perceiving, evaluating, and acting in society takes many different forms in the various texts, but ultimately boils down to a shift from self-love (*philautia*) to self-knowledge (cf. *gnôthi seauton*) and philanthropy (*philanthrôpia*): if one wants to be praised by others, for example, one should not sing one's own praises without further ado, but instead mix them with self-criticism.

As such, Plutarch's practical ethics constitute a unique philosophical project. For sure, they are not interested in offering theoretical discussions of technical philosophy such as the generation of the soul or the nature of moral virtue. Instead, they are concerned with practical topics such as peace of mind, friends, family, money, or politics. But even taken together, the various texts in this group of Plutarchan writings do not add up to an ethical system: topics have been chosen because they tended to cause problems for the Greco-Roman elite of Plutarch's time, not because they were important within a philosophical system. In line with this, Plutarch's practical ethics do not always clearly confess themselves to one philosophical school: references to Plato abound, but Peripatetic, Stoic, and even Epicurean elements are brought up whenever they can support Plutarch's argument. The point Plutarch is making, then, is not primarily which philosophical school

holds the best ideas on certain topics: rather, he is trying to convince a non-specialist, powerful readership of the benefits philosophy in general may hold for them. The very characteristics that have led previous scholars to dismiss Plutarch's practical ethics – lack of technical discussions, absence of systematical thought, eclecticism – thus turn out to be the result of a conscious choice, which can be perfectly explained by reference to Plutarch's target readership and practical aims. The former of these two elements has been discussed above; the latter can best be summarized in terms of the ancient rhetorical system: as set out above, Plutarch's practical ethics aim to *move* (*movere*) the reader toward a more philosophical attitude. This aim sets them apart from the works of technical philosophy, which aim to teach (*docere*), on the one hand, and from the rhetorical works, which aim first and foremost to please (*placere*), on the other (e.g. Kennedy (1963) 292–293).

Plutarch himself reflects upon the strategies needed in order to realize this aim. The most explicit passage occurs in *On Talkativeness*: “we overcome our emotions through conviction (*krisēi*) and exercise (*askēsei*), but conviction comes first. For nobody accustoms himself to shun and reject from his soul what he is not disgusted (*dyscherainei*) at, and we are disgusted at our emotions once we rationally apprehend the harm (*blabas*) and shame (*aischynas*) deriving from them” (510C–D, trans. Van Hoof (2010) 47). In some texts, including *On Talkativeness*, conviction and exercise are neatly separated and explicitly announced; in others, they are much less visible. But in all of his practical ethics, Plutarch in some form or other both convinces the reader and offers him help and guidance. It is therefore worthwhile to have a closer look at these two aspects.

As far as conviction is concerned, Plutarch uses explicit and implicit arguments. The former can be easily detected throughout the practical ethics, wherever Plutarch points out to the reader that a certain type of behavior will lead him to incur either harm, for example physical pain or financial loss, or shame, which, as Ingenkamp ((1971) 76) has shown, can be considered social harm. Especially shame is often invoked in more implicit ways too. Three major rhetorical strategies can be discerned. First, Plutarch offers his readers positive models for imitation and negative models from which to dissociate themselves. The behavior he wishes to promote in his readers is often associated with well-educated gentlemen who are said to be admired by many; the opposite behavior is ascribed to people of low social rank such as sailors, barbers, or slaves, whom educated readers will look down upon. The most important, but often neglected, models for imitation, however, are the characters that appear in the practical ethics. Indeed, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Van Hoof (2010) 41–47), the addressees, dedicatees, and narratees introduced in the various texts can be considered dramatic roles: “This is not to say that these dramatic roles are necessarily fictitious (indeed, one would expect them to correspond plausibly to reality); rather, the concept of dramatic role serves to stress the fact that the primary role of these characters as they are being depicted in Plutarch's texts is to steer the real readers' responses” (43). Above, the exemplary attitudes of Plutarch's wife Timoxena and of the brothers Avidius Nigrinus and Quietus were already highlighted. Another clear example can be found in *Precepts of Health Care*. In the opening dialogue, Moschion and Zeuxippus appear as well-educated gentlemen who appreciate Plutarch's healthcare advice. In their conversation, they refer to a doctor called Glaucus, who not only repudiates Plutarch's ideas on medicine, but also appears as an unsociable figure lacking culture and education. What the reader takes away from

this opening is that if one wants to create a positive impression on others as do Moschion and Zeuxippus, rather than the negative one conveyed by Glaucus, one had better show oneself willing to listen to some philosophical advice.

A second device deployed by Plutarch is the strategic use of different grammatical persons. In *On the Control of Anger*, for example, Fundanus starts off by telling in the first person singular how he learnt to control his anger. Gradually, he shifts to the first person plural. As he is talking to Sulla, this first person plural may at first sight simply refer to the two friends. Yet when reading the first person plural, the reader inevitably finds himself included in it as well. This so-called sociative (Slotty (1928)) “we” is, moreover, offset against the third person singular: “he” is incurring dishonor because he doesn’t control his anger. The move from a personal account to a general therapy that holds not just for Fundanus himself but also for the readers of Plutarch’s text is compounded by the final switch to the use of impersonal third person imperatives (e.g. *dei*, “one should”).

The same text can also illustrate Plutarch’s third strategy for convincing the reader: stressing the perception of one’s behavior by others. By allowing room for social control by the reader’s peer group, Plutarch clearly distinguishes himself from other philosophers. Epictetus, for example, “leads students to adopt an observer’s perspective on themselves while freeing them from concerns about how actual observers view them” (Kamtekar (1998) 137). When it comes to anger, for example, Plutarch’s main argument is not that anger is a vice, as was argued by Seneca in his treatise *On Anger*, but that anger destroys a gentleman’s reputation when he is seen and heard by friends and family whilst in the grip of it – his face distorted, his voice deformed, his whole appearance changed for the worse (cf. Van Hoof (2007)).

More generally, what strikes the eye when one analyzes these three strategies is that all three of them play heavily on the reader’s sense of honor. If some people put their health at risk by stuffing themselves with exotic foods so as to be able to boast that they have tasted such delicacies, Plutarch will not argue that it is wrong to search for honor through one’s eating habits because such externalities are, from a philosophical perspective, indifferent; instead, he will teach the reader that much more honor is to be gained (*philotimêteon: Precepts of Health Care* 125C) from abstinence. Likewise in the *Political Precepts*, Plutarch explicitly states that the good politician will not despise honor; nor should he. But he should know that true honor (*timén*, 820E–821A) lies not where the multitude sees it but in the respect and goodwill of one’s citizens. Far from doing away with the reader’s pre-philosophical concerns and ambitions, then, Plutarch presents philosophy as a way of meeting them more successfully.³

Once the reader has been convinced that he will fare well by following Plutarch’s advice, he will need to translate this into practice. In order to help him, Plutarch offers two kinds of exercises. First there are mental exercises (*epilogismoi*), thoughts which the reader should cultivate so as to internalize the arguments brought forward in the conviction. In *On Curiosity*, for example, Plutarch tells the reader to keep in mind that investigating other people’s evils is typical for sycophants and informers. “It is,” he writes, “not useless for busybodies to reflect upon this, in order that they feel shame at the similarity and resemblance of their behaviour with that of the most hated and loathed people” (*On Curiosity* 523B, trans. Van Hoof (2010) 199). The second kind of exercise is practical training (*ethismos*). In this category, one finds the proposal to mix self-praise with references to the effort it cost to reach the good result (*On Praising Oneself*

Inoffensively 14), the suggestion that brothers mourn together at the death of their father so as to avoid discussion on the inheritance (*On Brotherly Love* 483C), and the advice not to attach oneself to particular pieces of tableware so as to avoid getting angry when they are broken (*On the Control of Anger* 461E), to name just a few examples. Often, such practical exercises come in series. In *On Curiosity*, for instance, the reader first learns not to read the graffiti he encounters on his way, second not to spy into open doors, next not to get involved when crowds gather around a dispute in the marketplace, then to refuse an invitation to a show, then again to sometimes close one's ears to small talk about oneself or one's household, and finally not to rush when a letter or a messenger arrives (520D–522F). Taken together, this series constitutes a fully fledged therapy, starting with easy exercises and gradually moving toward more difficult ones.

Above, we have seen how the aim of Plutarch's practical ethics to move the reader sets these texts apart from the author's technical-philosophical and rhetorical output. The aim of the *Lives* comes much closer to that of the practical ethics: both work toward the moral improvement of the reader. Yet the way in which they do so is quite different. As Tim Duff has demonstrated, the *Lives* work above all else through exploratory moralism: they provide "food for reflection, a reflection which may, ultimately, affect the audience's behavior" ((1999) 69). Although deploying a range of rhetorical strategies designed to steer the reader's reactions, the texts we have been looking at in this chapter distinguish themselves first and foremost through their unique practical nature: they propose hands-on exercises that will help the reader in his everyday practice. On the one hand, this makes the practical ethics "easier" for the reader to digest, in that he receives stronger, clearer guidance. On the other hand, however, it makes them more demanding in that they leave the reader less space: once the reader has accepted the diagnoses set out in the conviction, he will be almost obliged to take in the medicine Plutarch has prepared.

4. Conclusions and Outlook

Ancient philosophy is usually studied as a set of theories debated between different schools. From this perspective, Plutarch's practical ethics have little new to offer compared to tradition, and little extra compared to the doctrines set out in Plutarch's other works. As a result, the practical ethics have long been dismissed as second-rank philosophy. More recently, however, scholars such as Johannes Hahn (1989), Michael Trapp (2007), and Matthias Haake (2009) have rightly emphasized the importance of philosophy's socio-historical embedding.⁴ Read in this way, Plutarch's practical ethics are a unique project in which both the aims and the strategies of philosophy are being ingeniously adapted to meet the specific requirements of the Greek and Roman elite of the Early Empire. Taking the practical ethics seriously, therefore, does not so much mean admitting that they contain some good philosophical reasoning by the standards of the technical works, but rather reading them in their own right, as a group of philosophical texts uniquely designed to sell a philosophical message to a non-specialist, highly elite public.

Plutarch's choice to write these texts in the way he did has three important consequences. First, it shows that Plutarch, far from being a lesser philosopher because some of his works are less original or rigorous from a technical point of view, was, instead, able to diversify philosophy: as opposed to other writers, who often confined

themselves to a specialist audience or to one philosophical genre, Plutarch did not bet on one horse but devised variegated ways to appeal to different target audiences. Second, by adapting philosophy to suit the needs of powerful and often politically active Greeks and Romans, Plutarch established and reinforced his ties with the elite of his day. Like the teachers of yoga and mindfulness mentioned in the introduction, surfing on his famous addressees' fame may well have contributed to Plutarch's own prestige too, and that, in turn, may have convinced powerful figures such as Sosius Senecio to commission more works from him. And third, by convincing these influential people that philosophy will help them to lead their lives more successfully, Plutarch promotes philosophy at the expense of competing cultural models such as oratory and medicine. At various points in his practical ethics Plutarch indeed explicitly sets off his own advice with that of other intellectuals. By thus opening up a debate about different kinds of intellectual and cultural authority, he offers a distinctive view of what elite culture should be like – a view that firmly promotes his own position in society.

Taken together, these three consequences thus force us to reassess Plutarch's relationship with the Second Sophistic.⁵ Indeed, whilst the traditional image places Plutarch, as a philosopher, outside the Second Sophistic, the practical ethics show him partaking – albeit on his own terms, with a focus on the quality rather than the quantity of his audience – in the competition for the ears and hearts of the public that is usually taken as the core characteristic of the Second Sophistic. Plutarch, so we can conclude, may be much closer to the Second Sophistic than is usually assumed, and the practical ethics may well be Plutarch's (rather successful) way of taking part in the sophistic context of his days.

NOTES

- 1 This section relies heavily on Van Hoof (2010), where further details, arguments, and elaborate case studies can be found.
- 2 Against Hadot (1995b) 272 and Barnes (2002), who do away with the distinction between professional and amateur philosophers almost completely, one can set not only Plutarch's own explicit distinction in *On Brotherly Love* 479E, but also the more general ancient contrast between the political and the philosophical life. Although, as Trapp (2007) 23–27 has recently suggested, one can recognize various degrees of professionalism within the group of philosophers, there always remains a fundamental gap between even the *Halbphilosophen* and people who were not and did not pretend to be at all philosophers themselves. For an account of what a philosopher was in Plutarch's days, see Hahn (1989) esp. 9–17 and 202–208; Hadot (1995a) esp. 46–87.
- 3 This reimplementation may also account for the often-noted ambiguity in Plutarch's concept of ambition: honor is good as long as one is able to give it a philosophically acceptable implementation, but can become dangerous if not. Cf. Van Hoof (2010) 56.
- 4 For more details, see Van Hoof (2010) 264.
- 5 For more on this topic, see Schmitz in this volume, and Van Hoof (2010) 261–263.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Long dismissed as "popular philosophy," Plutarch's practical ethics have recently been systematically studied as a group in a monograph by Van Hoof (2010). Before this, Ingenkamp (1971)

published a study of five psychotherapeutic writings, and Tsekourakis (1983) examined the relationship of Plutarch's practical ethics to the diatribe and related genres. Amongst the wealth of articles that have been published on Plutarch's practical ethics, Jones' 1966 study on the chronology of Plutarch's works and Van der Stockt's 1999 contribution on clusters should be mentioned. Further articles, which can easily be found in the journal *Ploutarchos* and the conference acts of the International Plutarch Society, include mainly lexicographical or thematic studies, besides investigations into the philosophical affiliation of individual treatises. More information on research into Plutarch's practical ethics can be found in the first section of this chapter.

CHAPTER 10

Political Philosophy

Christopher Pelling

Philosophy and politics could prove a tricky mixture, and Plutarch knew it. Several times he refers approvingly to the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king. The peace that Rome enjoyed during Numa's reign demonstrated the truth of Plato's insight that "the only respite and release from evils is for some divine good fortune to bring kingly power together with philosophical thinking, so that virtue may master and tower over vice" (*Num.* 20.8, quoting *Resp.* 473c–d and *Leg.* 711e–712a); when Cicero possessed what was effectively sole power, his handling of the Catilinarian conspirators "bore witness to" the same truth (*Comp. Dem.-Cic.* 3.4). He is also particularly concerned with his heroes' youth and *paideia*, especially their Hellenic *paideia* (Swain (1990a), (1990b), (1992); Pelling (1989)): Alexander's early training under Aristotle prepared him well for his momentous deeds (*Alex.* 7–8, implicitly suggesting the point spelled out at *De Alex. fort.* 1.327e), even if his journeying from Greece later carried with it a corresponding cultural distance from Greek ways (Whitmarsh (2002)). And yet those who most conspicuously apply philosophy to politics so often get it wrong. The younger Cato was one, and his high-minded refusal to countenance a marriage-link with Pompey was disastrous: it would have been so much better if he had brought himself to compromise (*Cat. Min.* 30.9–10). He was just out of kilter with the needs of the times: it was as if he was speaking in Plato's Republic, not in the cesspool of the Roman state (*Phoc.* 3.2, quoting Cic. *Att.* 2.1.8). Brutus was another; like Cato, he may deserve admiration for his high principles, but ultimately he was wrong. The political conditions required monarchy, and Caesar was the correct answer for Rome (see below).

The man with the best philosophical launching-pad was surely Dion, the pupil of Plato himself, and yet he too goes astray (de Blois (1997); Pelling (2004)). When he spares an inveterate opponent, Dion explicitly relates the decision to his training in the Academy (*Dion* 47.4–9) – but his more street-wise friends know that it is a mistake (47.3, 48.9),

and a little later Dion has to order his killing anyway (53.6). Plato himself had advised Dion that his own stubborn temperament might be his own worst enemy (8.4, 52.5): he needed to develop plausibility, to be able to persuade and conciliate and compromise, to know how to get on with people.

Still, it is not just too much philosophical education (or too insensitively applied) that can be a problem, it can also be too little. Thus it is a failure in personal interaction that typifies those whose lack of Hellenic *paideia* is most marked, Coriolanus (*Cor.* 1.3–5) and Marius (*Mar.* 2.3–4; Swain (1990a), (1990b)). In the *Marius* case Plutarch quotes Plato's own advice to a morose fellow-philosopher: "my dear Xenocrates, sacrifice to the Graces!" Nor is that the only "uneducated" characteristic that Coriolanus and Marius share. Their lack of self-control is also clear, especially in their irrepressible anger and their failure to cope with reverses, and in both cases this is immensely damaging to their leadership. Here again a better emotional balance can be promoted by an education in philosophy: this is covered in other chapters in this volume (especially Becchi); and it can certainly be theorized in philosophical terms, as Plutarch does in Aristotelian mode in *On Moral Virtue*. Timoleon's unsettled reaction to his brother's execution is duly related to the general truth that reason and philosophy give a person stability and strength (*Tim.* 6.1–4; Van Raalte (2005) 85–86). When Themistocles neglects "character-forming educational pursuits or those conducing to some pleasure or liberal gracefulness" and concentrates only on those of more practical application (*Them.* 2.3), the negative effect is immediately pointed out (2.7), and can be traced in his later life (Duff (2008) 3–11); the same is true of Philopoemen's choice of formative reading, over-selectively concentrating on military handbooks (*Phil.* 4.6–10, cf. Pelling (1997) 125–135). But it is not distinctively what we would call *political* philosophy that would here have helped, not any teaching about the ideal state or constitution, more a broader ethical perspective on how to "live well" (*euzēn*) in such a way as to help oneself and one's society to thrive (Trapp (2004) 194).

There remain ways in which political philosophy is useful to Plutarch as a historical analyst, and Plato in particular often serves as an intertextual referent. The simplest cases are those where Plutarch deploys a Platonic *aperçu* that is felt to be straightforwardly *right*. That appeal to Xenocrates to "sacrifice to the Graces!" (*Mar.* 2.3) is one instance, and that is mirrored at the end of that *Life* by a mention of Plato's calm dying words, so different from Marius' own frenzied end (*Mar.* 46.1). Often such references also suggest broader reminiscences. *Antony* quotes *Gorgias* in illustrating Cleopatra's "flattery" (*Ant.* 29.1, citing *Grg.* 462c–466a), and *Phaedrus* for the way that Antony's "rebellious and unmanageable" side kicked off all restraints (*Ant.* 36.2 ~ *Phdr.* 254a): those citations summon up a wider conspectus of Platonic ideas about the dangers of over-persuasiveness, the contrast with true statesmanship, and the struggle between higher and lower parts of the soul, all of them valuable for understanding Antony. The proem of *Galba* quotes Plato on the virtue of obedience, and the need for education to "achieve the correct balance between humane gentleness and spirited vigor" (*Galb.* 1.3): that initiates a web of Platonic allusiveness that runs through the *Life*, bringing out the gruesome "headlessness" that threatens if the "spirited" part of the soul or city does not accept proper guidance from the wiser, rational part (Ash (1997)).

Coriolanus develops a similar idea:

Coriolanus had always given free reign to the spirited and contentious part of his soul, as if there were some inherent grandeur and greatness of will in those qualities, and he had never

allowed the characteristics of gravity and gentleness – so central to political life – to be textured by wisdom and education. He never understood that the man who aspires to play a part in public life must avoid at all costs that stubbornness which, in Plato's phrase, is the natural companion of solitude; but rather must mingle with other people, and even come to love the capacity to accept injury, so derided by some. (*Cor.* 15.4)

The explicit Platonic allusion is to the *Fourth Letter* (321c), but the language recalls in particular the “parts of the soul” of the *Republic*. There the “spirited” (*to thumoeides*) corresponds to the middle class of citizen, the “helpers” or *epikouroi*, whose job is warfare; but an individual's “spiritedness” also requires careful education (410b–412a, 441e–442a), and needs an admixture of “gentleness,” *praotes*, in order to interact peaceably with others (*Resp.* 375b–c) – “gentleness,” a quality that Coriolanus so conspicuously lacks (Pelling (2002) 344–346). So this whole complex makes Coriolanus an interesting illustration of that canonical insight, with various ideas all given a Platonic pedigree – and not just Platonic, for Aristotle could be regarded as Plato's continuator in stressing *to thumoeides* (Hershbell (2004); Beneker (2012) ch. 1; and Becchi in this volume): Coriolanus as the warrior, spirited and contentious; the need for more than this, especially gentleness, to succeed in politics; the deficiencies in education that explain how Coriolanus went wrong; the way that this might reflect a general deficiency of the state at the time, preoccupied as it was with its wars (cf. *Cor.* 1). And one again sees that distinctive Plutarchan emphasis on the need for social skills and the link with emotional balance. Reading Plato, along with a more general exposure to Greek culture, might even have helped Coriolanus to acquire those skills; it anyway allows Plutarch to appeal to a ready-made, powerful analysis to lend authority to his analysis.

So far Plato is indeed “authoritative”: he got things right. But Plutarch, however enthusiastic a Platonist, was also a critical one. Sometimes, for particular reasons, he might allow reservations to pass unexpressed. It is hard to think that the uxorious Plutarch, for whom monogamy and the nuclear family held such appeal (cf. e.g. *Cat. Min.* 7.3 as well as the *Advice to Bride and Groom* and the *Consolation to his Wife*), really approved of the sexual communism and eugenics of the *Republic* or of Lycurgus' Sparta: but the *Republic* is quoted (*Lyc.* 15.1) and alluded to (15.15 ~ *Resp.* 459a) as he describes those Lycurgan reforms, preparing for the explicit statement at 31.2 that Lycurgus provided a starting-point for Plato's model. That is not enough to make those reforms appealing, but along with the recurrent citations of Aristotle (seven times in the *Life*, including 14.1 on the sexuality; seven also of Plato) it does intimate that this is the level on which assessment needs to operate.

Sometimes we see a more elaborate dialogue with Plato: in the *Amatorius*, for instance, where he deftly appropriates Platonic erotic insights to support a rather unPlatonic preference for heterosexual love; or in the proem to *Demetrius*, where he uses Platonic categories to support the use of literature to provide negative examples, a procedure that contrasts with the strict censorship that Plato himself commended (Duff (2004)); or in the *Dion*, where subtle echoes of Plato suggest reservations about Dion's own attempt to apply Platonic insights (Beneker (2012) ch. 2). Political judgments sometimes involved Plutarch in similar dialogue, especially in cases where his principles of moral generosity (cf. esp. *Cim.* 2.4–5) called for defense against Platonic attack. In

Pericles he engages with the way that Plato ranked Pericles along with Themistocles, Cimon, and Miltiades as corrupting forces in Athenian politics (*Grg.* 503c ff., esp. 515d–516d). That is a passage he knew well and refers to in *Aristides* (25.9), but avoids citing explicitly in *Pericles*, even though *Gorgias* can be sensed in the background of the list of demagogic techniques at *Per.* 9.1; the work is quoted only for an incidental detail at 13.7. His respect for Plato is such that dissent is best left inexplicit (Swain (1990c) 77), rather as *Gorgias* is never explicitly quoted in *Advice on Public Life* with its implied praise for those who lead in a Periclean manner (Trapp (2004) 199). Still, the dissent is clear, and the rhetorical techniques through which Plutarch builds his defense in *Pericles* are most elaborate (Stadter (1987) and (1989) xxxviii–xl). Much comes down to the argument that Pericles’ demagoguery was a necessity of the times (one again sees that distinctive insistence on the need for compromise); his demagogic phase (7–15) was a means to an end (7.3), and once he had established his supremacy he could develop instead an “aristocratic and kingly political stance which he used in an upright and unbending way for the best interests of the state [...] just like a doctor treating a complicated and chronic disease, according to the needs of the moment sometimes offering harmless pleasures but sometimes also sharp pains and medications” (*Per.* 15.1). That doctor-image is itself a Platonic favorite (*Phdr.* 270b–d; *Leg.* 720a–e; *Grg.* 478a–479e, etc.); and *Phaedrus* is also twice quoted for Pericles’ elevated rhetorical style (8.2, 15.2). In this way Plutarch “uses Plato’s own ideas to defend Pericles against Plato’s attack” (Stadter (1989) 191 on *Per.* 15.2), not unlike that skillful anti-Platonic appropriation of Plato in *Amatorius*.

So Platonic political philosophy can become a powerful analytic tool, affording a repertoire of, and for, historical evaluation. The same is true of the analysis of the cycle of constitutions in *Republic* 8–9. Echoes of this are heard at the end of *Caesar*, where the resonant phrase marking the inception of Caesar’s monarchy – “This was acknowledged tyranny: he already enjoyed a monarch’s unaccountability, and now he had a monarch’s permanence as well” (*Caes.* 57.1) – echoes the “acknowledged tyranny” that at *Republic* 569b marks the end of the cycle when the demagogue emerges as tyrant (565c–566d). In one way that suits Caesar, for his demagogic techniques have been traced throughout the *Life* (4.4–7, 5.8–9, 7.1–4, 20.2, 57.8). The internal disorder that typified Plato’s unruly democracy (563e–564b) also fits the “evil state of politics” (*kakopoliteia*) that Plutarch has traced at *Caes.* 28, and this picks up an insight of Greek theorizing that goes well beyond Plato: “if anyone thinks that a king or a tyrant comes about from any other cause but lawlessness and greed, that person is a fool” (Anonymus Iamblichi 7.12–14; cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1304b19–a10, 1319b27–32). Still, by now the picture has become complicated, and it is more interesting to note the ways that Caesar does *not* fit the traditional stereotype. Plato’s demagogue does not shrink from bloodshed (566e) and ruthlessly eliminates anyone who is a threat (567b–c); Caesar practices clemency (57.4), even giving honors to old adversaries (57.5), and fails to move against Brutus and Cassius despite his suspicions (62.9–10). Plato’s tyrant protects himself with a bodyguard (566b, 567d–e); Caesar refuses one (57.7). Plato’s tyrant behaves well in his first days in power, “smiling and greeting everyone he meets [...] and pretending to be benign and gentle to everyone” (566d–e). Caesar’s “gentleness” (57.4) – *praotes* again, the same word as in Plato – goes deeper, and he knows that popular goodwill is a better way to protect one’s power (57.1). All the more telling, then, that the cycle continues to turn, and that for all his unPlatonic traits Caesar too is doomed.

So traditional, especially Platonic, political theorizing afforded Plutarch a rich set of idioms and models against which he could set his own narratives: sometimes they fit those models, sometimes they afford interesting variations, and either way they give his knowledgeable readers food for analytical thought. If, however, one traces the *practical* wisdom that readers could extract from these models, or the mistakes or successes of the protagonists to which they point, the conclusions are similar to those with which we started. Caesar may or may not have known Plato's analysis; if he was heeding it, this did him no good. Wise politicians anyway know that they need to conciliate and to compromise; they need the goodwill of the people, and that does not come easily. One cannot afford too much high-mindedness; one's vigorous spirit, however useful on the battlefield, needs to be controlled and restrained in the agora or the forum. Plutarch and his readers can phrase this in philosophical terms and see this in the light of the greatest philosophical models. The politicians themselves can benefit from a similar education, as *paideia* can do nothing but good. But, when it comes to the real politics, most of the lessons to be learned from philosophy are not driven by any *political* theory. They are just part of life – of the good life.

The two most important political essays are *Should an Old Man Take Part in Politics?* and *Advice on Public Life*. There is less of interest in the fragmentary or unfinished *Philosophers Should Talk Especially to Men of Power* (though the title is suggestive) and *To an Uneducated Man of Power*, and the authenticity of the few surviving pages of *On Monarchy, Democracy, and Oligarchy* is very questionable.

Advice on Public Life and *Should an Old Man Take Part in Politics?* leave a similar impression to the *Lives*, with “remarks spread through the treatises [...] which characterize the life of politics in terms that are as familiar, or more familiar, as distinctively philosophical formulations of the well-lived, virtuous, philosophical human life in general” (Trapp (2004) 194). *Advice* is addressed to the young Menemachus of Sardis, who purportedly has asked Plutarch for some counsel as he begins his political career, and “does not have time to examine a philosopher's life in the open as it engages in political activity and public competitions” (798b). But evidently the work would not have been published were it not intended for a wider audience (we know of one quite different reader, Cornelius Pulcher of Epidaurus: *How to Benefit from One's Enemies* 86c–d), and it would be a mistake to look for specifically Sardian coloring beyond a few superficial local touches (813e, 825c–d). “To paint a portrait of any city was to paint one of every city” in Greece or Asia Minor at the time (Renoirte (1951) 82), and its picture is often for instance reminiscent of the Bithynian cities familiar from Book 10 of Pliny's *Letters* and from the speeches of Dio of Prusa. It is a world of competitive elite expenditure on ostentatious benefactions (euergetism); a world where this can easily lead the over-enthusiastic and reckless into debt; a world where there are still assemblies to be persuaded; a world where friends are jockeying for favors, and where other people's “envy,” *phthonos*, is a constant danger among the elite; a world where Roman power hovers in the background. One feature of the addressee's identity does however matter, and that is his youth and perhaps (to judge from that passage about “not having time”) the impatience that goes along with that; the tone adopted is very much that of the older and experienced man advising the beginner, and in this respect it coheres closely with *Should an Old Man Take Part in Politics?*, addressed to Euphanes, a distinguished Athenian (Jones (1971) 110 n. 5). The answer Plutarch gives to the question of that work's title is a resounding yes, though that role should now

be an altered one. The older man should know when to draw back, and to allow the younger to have their time in the political limelight (793a–794a, 795a, 796b); but he can still be useful, particularly in the advice that he can give to his juniors (790d–791a, 795a–796b). One attractive suggestion is that the two works go together in a metatextual way (Xenophontos (2012) 85–86), with *Advice* embodying the sort of wise counsel that the “old man” of the other work can usefully convey. That emphasis on youth also means that there are many links with the more clearly educational works, *How to Listen* and *How to Listen to the Poets*, even though the political essays relate to a later stage of a young man’s formation.

Both *Advice* and *Should an Old Man* seem to belong to that productive phase of Plutarch’s writing when he was over fifty (Jones (1966)), in other words to the period when he was also engaged in the *Parallel Lives*. One pointer to that is the frequency with which their political examples relate to the figures treated in the *Lives*: usually the stories are also used in the *Lives* themselves, and even when they are not (as in the thoughts of Pericles as he “took up his cloak” (*Advice on Public Life* 813d–e, see below)), it is easy to imagine that Plutarch had come across them, or been reminded of them, by his biographical work. That contrasts with the (probably earlier) *On the Fortune of the Romans* and *On the Glory of the Athenians*, which draw their examples from a wider range of periods. A date in the first decade of the second century looks most likely for *Advice* (Carrière (1984) 9–13). *Should an Old Man* must also come from a similar period, as it is clear that Plutarch is an “old man” himself (783b), one who “has been serving the Pythian god for many Pythiads” (792f; see Stadter and Hirsch-Luipold in this volume); possibly not as old as all that – perhaps sixty or so? – but certainly old enough for the description to be apt (Jones (1966) 73 = (1995) 122), and again this puts the essay firmly in the period when Plutarch was working on the *Parallel Lives*. It is not surprising then that the essays reflect a similar mindset to the *Lives*, but we shall also see that Plutarch is careful in discriminating the lessons that the worlds of the *Lives* can teach.

The most important feature of his political thinking is the insistence that thinking is not enough: the educated man has a duty to become involved, to lead and not merely observe. The distancing from political life and the quietism of Cynicism or Epicureanism are not for him (Trapp (2004) 198), however tempted one might be by a more bookish life of contemplation. One can see that in the self-portrayal in *Advice*, explaining how he takes on local responsibilities that might involve clearing ditches and diverting streams.

Visitors laugh at me when they see me occupied, as I often am, with public duties like that; but I just recall the story they tell about Antisthenes. Someone expressed surprise when he was carrying a pickled fish himself through the marketplace: “well, it’s for myself,” he said. I, on the other hand, say something different to people who take me to task for overseeing some tile-measuring or cement-mixing or stone-carrying: “it’s not for me that I’m building this,” I say, “it’s for my country.” (*Advice on Public Life* 811b–c)

One can see it too in the *Lives*, in the sympathy he shows for Cicero when he is torn between (in Aristotelian terms) the active and the theoretical life (Moles (1988) 151); in many ways Cicero was Plutarch’s sort of person, and Cicero too knew there were times when the life of the intellect had to be laid aside.

In *Advice* he accordingly advises Menemachus not to go looking for public office, but to accept it when it came his way (813c–d), and the point recurs in *Should an Old Man Take Part in Public Life?* (793c–d, 794b). Ambition can be a good thing, here as in the educational essays (*How to Listen to the Poets* 30e; *How to Track One's Progress in Virtue* 77b); but here as there, it can go wrong, and requires guidance, limitation, and self-control (*Advice* 819e–820f, 822c; *How to Listen* 39e, 47d; *How to Track One's Progress in Virtue* 78e–f, 80b), and this again is where the older man can help. This balance too has something of a Platonic ring, though it of course remains true that Socrates was a good deal more apolitical than Plutarch would recommend. Still, this recalls both the way that Plato distances his Socrates from the wrong sort of ambition, that self-seeking variety that characterized the approach of a Callicles (*Grg.* 482c–486d), and the engagement of Socrates too in public affairs when the state required, in fighting at Potidaea or Delium for instance (*Symp.* 219e–221c, drawn on at *Alc.* 7.3–6); and, perhaps more especially, the insistence in the *Republic* that the enlightened philosopher should go back into the cave to give leadership and to help others to a higher knowledge of the good (*Resp.* 539e–540c). That sort of guidance is what equips a Socrates to be the only true practitioner of politics (*Grg.* 521d; Trapp (2004) 194, 198–199), and *Should an Old Man* explicitly compares the way an old man can always make himself accessible for advice to the philosophical example that Socrates set (796e–797a).

So the Platonic “political practitioner” *educates* his fellow-citizens; so do some of the more admired Plutarchan heroes of the *Lives*, for instance in the way Pericles “taught” the Athenians a particular way of looking at their empire (*Per.* 12.3; cf. e.g. *Rom.* 13.5; *Cat. Min.* 18.4; *Pelop.* 35.5). *Paideia*, then, comes back in a different form, not merely in the formation of the good politician but also in the role he has to play.

How is one to teach? Partly by moral example: Plutarch is clear that a leader will falter unless his private life is above reproach (*Advice* 800c–801c), so once again we see that assimilation to the generally “well-lived life.” But education also requires persuasion if one is to lead by consent rather than force, and *Advice* develops the idea of rhetoric as an “instrument” (*organon*), a means to an end (801c–802a). This too is an idea that often recurs in the *Lives*. Fabius “trained his body for warfare as a sort of natural armory, and his speech as an instrument of persuasion before the people” (*Fab.* 1.7); Cicero too developed his political rhetoric as an “instrument” (*Cic.* 4.5), and so did Pericles (*Per.* 8.1). This stress on the positive value of rhetoric is a further step away from Plato, at least from the strong contrast of virtue and rhetorical art in the *Gorgias*; yet Plutarch’s position is more Aristotelian than Isocratean, seeing immense point in both philosophy and rhetoric. It is the *combination* of rhetoric and moral impeccability that persuades (801c–d). It is fitting, then, that rhetoric is often most impressively persuasive in the *Lives* when combined with virtue, even a philosophically formulated version of virtue (as with Cato at Utica, *Cat. Min.* 54; Van Raalte (2005) 103–110, esp. 107). In such widely different political contexts as those of Volumnia in the 490s, Chilonis in 241, Tiberius Gracchus in 133, or Brutus in 42 (*Cor.* 35; *Comp. Ag.-Cleom.* 17; *Ti. Gracch.* 9; *Brut.* 40), Plutarch’s own most moving speeches concern deep issues of how one ought to behave at moments of extreme crisis: virtue and rhetoric – rhetoric when used as it could be used for good, not in the ways derided by Plato – indeed go hand in hand.

Another Platonic insight, one shared with Aristotle, is that rhetoric requires an understanding of an audience’s psychology. For Plato this was one of the factors that

distanced rhetoric from truthfulness, leaving the orator as analogous to a confectioner or a beautician (*Grg.* 464b–466a); Plutarch, like Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, developed the point more positively, and this is a further dimension in which he insists on the need for the politician to get on with people, to interact sensitively with those around him. It is specifically in their public speech that those exemplars of uneducated stubbornness, Coriolanus and Marius, fall down (*Cor.* 18.3, 20.6; *Mar.* 9.3–4). And not every people is the same.

The statesman, until he acquires the strength which carries conviction through prestige and trust, must be flexible and accommodate himself to the underlying character of his state, appreciating what gives a people pleasure and what considerations they are likely to find most persuasive. Take, for instance, the Athenian people, easily stirred to anger, easily shifted to pity, preferring a sharp dart of suspicion to a slow process of instruction: just as it is more eager to help men who are obscure and lowly, so it welcomes and prefers speech which is playful and humorous; it takes more pleasure than anyone else in those who praise it, and takes less offense at those who make fun at its expense; it is a source of fear to everyone, even its magistrates, then generous to everyone, even its enemies. The Carthaginian people is different, bitter, grim, deferring to its magistrates, harsh to its subjects, most ignoble in its fears, most savage in its angers, sticking resolutely to what it has decided, firm in resisting the blandishments of humor and amusement. They were not the sort of people who would have agreed with a laugh and applause, if Cleon asked them to postpone the assembly on the grounds that he had already sacrificed and was about to entertain some guests; or who, if Alcibiades had let a quail escape from his tunic when he was speaking, would have enthusiastically joined in to capture it and return it; no, they would have killed the men on the grounds of insulting arrogance and self-indulgence. (*Advice on Public Life* 799b–e)

So this accommodation to the mood of one's audience is important, but in its extreme form – catering to their “pleasure,” evoking the classical stereotype of “speaking to the mob's pleasure” that typifies the demagogue (Thuc. 2.65.8; Pl. *Grg.* 513f; Dem. 8.34 etc.) – it is also only transient: it is to last only “until he acquires the strength which carries conviction through prestige and trust,” just like the demagogic phase that was a means to an end in the early career of Pericles. Once that end is achieved, what then? It is again a matter of “teaching,” as hinted here in that description of the Athenian people as “preferring a sharp dart of suspicion to a slow process of instruction” and as Pericles “taught” the Athenians a particular way of looking at the empire. As Plutarch – and as any “old man” in *Should an Old Man* – teaches the political beginner now, so the matured politician will have to teach his people in his turn, “gradually attuning them as one leads them toward better ways and takes them gently in hand” (800a–b).

What, then, is to be “taught”? The commended qualities again seem unsurprising and unexceptionable: one should be a “doctor” of a state's malaise (*Advice* 814f–815c, 818b, 818d, 824a, 825a), in that favorite Platonic figure which also recurs in the educational works (*How to Listen* 46e–f; *How to Listen to the Poets* 22b, 34c). The greatest sickness of all, the one that particularly needs a statesmanly cure, is civil strife, *stasis* (823f–825f). What must be fostered instead is “harmony,” *harmonia*, and “concord,” *homonoia*, and the ideal “mixture,” *krasis*, of the state's different elements (*Should an Old Man* 791b–c; *Advice* 805d, 809e, 824a, 824d–e). These too go back to authoritative classical precedents, both philosophical (Democr. fr. 250 DK; Pl. *Resp.* 351d, 431e–432a, 441e–442a etc.) and

other: at *Prometheus Bound* 552 the “harmony” imposed by Zeus is something no mortals can evade. That last passage points to the way such language can be uncomfortably euphemistic, not unlike the way that a Spartan “harmost” is someone whose arrangements were not always what a subject state would welcome. Plutarch has no taste for such insensitive authoritarianism in itself. His picture of such “harmony” is more Gramscian, with an optimistic picture of leadership *by consent* and a people who are acclimatized to believe that their leaders are acting in the common interest and are happy to “be obedient,” just as a leader will himself obey when it is not his turn to rule (*Advice* 816f–817c).

The top-down nature of such leadership is clear, and Plutarch’s advice on assembly-management is disturbing to a modern ear:

Every people has embedded in it a strain of malice and fault-finding toward the politicians, so that many salutary measures arouse suspicions of collusion unless they meet some opposition and resistance: this, more than anything else, is what gives political partnerships and friendships a bad name. Therefore we should leave ourselves no genuine hostilities or differences, rather as the Chian demagogue – his actual name was Demos – spoke out against the expulsion of all his enemies after he had been victorious in a bout of civil faction “so that we should not start being at odds with our friends once we are totally free of our enemies.” That, admittedly, is simple-minded; but when the ordinary people are suspicious of some great and salutary proposal, it is a good idea to avoid having everyone coming and expressing the same view as if it was all set up in advance, but for two or three of the friends to take a different position and oppose in mild terms, then to say that they have changed their minds after seeing that they have lost the argument; in that way they draw the people with them, giving the impression that they have been won over by what is in the public interest. On lesser matters and ones of no great consequence, it is no bad thing to allow friends to have genuine disagreements, each following his own views: that helps to make it clear that, in the greatest and most important matters, their agreement is all for the best and not a matter of prearrangement.

The statesman is a natural leader of the city, like a queen among bees [...] (*Advice on Public Life* 813a–c)

Not much genuine democracy there, then, indeed a sort of “Machiavellianism” (Carrière (1984) 47); elsewhere one of his characters shows his approval of exploiting the mob’s superstition to deceive them for their own good (*De gen.* 580a). The important communication is clearly from the leader to the followers; there is not much interest in listening to what the people might have to say for themselves, except perhaps to indicate some minor treats they can be thrown to ensure that they are not allowed to “make mistakes about the bigger things” (818a). That too fits what we might infer from the *Lives*, where Plutarch is no democrat (e.g. *Cim.* 10.8, 15.2–3; Aalders (1982) 29–30, 44). His distaste for vulgar demagogic techniques – games and shows and hand-outs – is invariably clear (*Advice* 802d–2, 821e–f, 823d–e; cf. e.g. *Aem.* 2.6; *Brut.* 10.6), and one has to feel that he is not a very *good* Machiavellian: this high-minded rejection of those more basic techniques does show a very unworldly streak (Trapp (2004)).

Still, he knows that oligarchies can behave badly too (*Advice* 805d; Aalders (1982) 31), and in the *Lives* his fiercest criticisms are reserved for those who abuse that position of leadership by exploiting it for selfish or factional purposes. The Gracchi got things wrong by going too far, allowing themselves to be led on by their own followers to a stage where

it was no longer possible for them to draw back (*Comp. Ag.-Cleom.* 2; cf. *Advice* 798f–9a); but the real villains in *Gracchi* are the ruthless, unscrupulous, and self-seeking landowners, regularly (and rightly) presented with no sympathy at all. The Roman people certainly resent Coriolanus' haughtiness, but they respond positively to the slightest conciliation (18.1, 18.4), and it is the manipulative tribunes Brutus and Sicinnius who carry most of the blame (13.1–3, 17.3–4, 18). The foil to Coriolanus is the worthy Menenius Agrippa, highlighted at the beginning of that *Life* as the man who can communicate in the people's own language, using the fable of the stomach and the other parts of the body to explain that the people who do the work still need the elite to guide them (*Cor.* 6.3–5). Plutarch would himself have agreed with the moral, as well as welcoming Menenius' capacity for communication; but he would also expect a good deal more of his governing class than that delivered in Coriolanus' Rome. This is again a Gramscian picture of leadership by consent – but *benevolent* leadership, and consent that needs to be earned.

Where, though, is *contemporary* Rome in all this? It is understandable enough that he should not give advice on political activity at Rome itself; that might seem presumptuous in an outsider, and anyway Roman political life would have seemed so very different, with no room for such maneuverings before the people in a world so dominated by the emperor. In the passage on different popular tempers Athens is contrasted not with Rome, even a Rome of distant memory, but with Carthage. We should still expect a Roman dimension to be the overwhelmingly most important factor in Greek civic life as well, and indeed Roman aspects do emerge from time to time, in the way for instance that embassies to the emperor or the governor are an important sphere for public service (*Should an Old Man* 793d, 794a; *Advice* 805a, 819c–d: cf. Millar (1977) 228–240, 375–385). More important, though, are the constraints that Roman imperial realities impose:

As you enter on any office you should not merely recall the considerations of which Pericles would always remind himself when he took up his cloak: “Pay attention, Pericles! You are ruling free men, you are ruling Greeks, Athenian citizens.” You must also say this to yourself, “You are both ruler and ruled: the city is subject to proconsuls, the agents of Caesar.” (*Advice on Public Life* 813d–e)

Not that one should refer everything upwards; indeed, care is constantly needed to avoid provoking the Romans to become “even more the masters than they wish” (*Advice* 814e–815c). One reason for the elite to behave cooperatively to one another is to manage those below; another is to avoid drawing in “those above,” as he calls them in a suggestive phrase (814c), and that is the aspect given more space (814f–816a). It is important “to make one's cloak more modest, take a look at the orator's platform as it would appear from the governor's residence, not be too proud or too trusting in one's crown, and see the senatorial shoes above one's head” (*Advice* 813e). Above all, one must remember the “weakness of Greek affairs”: “what sort of power is it,” after all, “that a little decree of a proconsul destroys or transfers to someone else, and does not extend to anything worthwhile in any case?” (824e). The best thing is “always to have a friend among the most powerful people above” (814c), a friend presumably of the stamp of the influential Romans we find among his dinner companions in the *Table Talk* (see Klotz in this volume); that also resonates with the theme of *Philosophers Should Talk Especially to Men of Power*. The old man knows how to get things done.

The political career that is in point, though, remains distinctively Greek, one to be undertaken in, and for the benefit of, one's local community. That was not the only career on offer in the real world. It was a time when a Roman career was becoming increasingly open to well-born and rich young men from Greece and Asia Minor. Two of the first easterners to become senators were friends of Plutarch himself, C. Iulius Eurycles Herculaneus of Sparta and king Philopappus of Commagene (Jones (1971) 41, 46, 59), and the reign of Trajan, perhaps already the reign of Domitian, saw a particular senatorial influx from the east (Halfmann (1979) 71–81; Eck (2000) 219). Yet Plutarch never mentions that option. When the idea crops up elsewhere in his work he does not convey enthusiasm:

Here's some Chian, here's some Galatian or Bithynian who is not content if he has acquired some reputation or power among a section of his own community, but bewails the fact that he is not yet wearing the patrician shoe; if he gets as far as wearing that, he's sad that he is not yet a Roman praetor; once praetor, that he is not consul; once consul, that he was proclaimed second rather than first. (*On Peace of Mind* 470c–d)

His point there is admittedly about restlessness rather than Rome, and it recalls that passage at the end of *Marius* (46.1); but it is still interesting that Roman careerism is the instance to come to his mind. The same mindset is clear in *Advice*: if you leave home dreaming of lucrative provincial posts, you will grow old on other people's doorsteps (814d; cf. Swain (1996) 169–171, 182–183). A certain distancing from those Roman careerists is clear. Despite all those Roman friends, his own heart was not there.

That does not make *Advice* an anti-Roman work.

Consider the greatest goods that cities can enjoy, peace, freedom, prosperity, a thriving population, and concord. As for peace, the peoples have no need of politicians at the present time; every war, Greek and barbarian, has disappeared. The people have as much freedom as the ruling power allows, and perhaps more than this would be no good thing [...] (*Advice on Public Life* 824c; cf. *De Pyth. or.* 408b–d)

There may be some wistful nostalgia there for greater Greek freedom, those centuries when there were “wars to command and tyrannies to overthrow and alliances to work with” (*Advice* 805a; cf. *Should an Old Man* 784f), but Plutarch is not rosy-eyed about that freedom: the Greek cities wasted it in squabbling, and it was eventually the Roman philhellene Flamininus who came and gave Greece the freedom that they had been unable to protect for themselves (*Flam.* 11; cf. *Ages.* 15). And one-man rule was the right answer for Rome; Caesar seemed “Heaven's own gift to Rome as the gentlest possible doctor” (*Comp. Dion-Brut.* 2.2; cf. *Ant.* 56.6; *Brut.* 47.7) – that Platonic “doctoring” figure yet again. Even the distancing should be seen more as a positive feeling for those who are content to stay at home, just as Plutarch himself stayed in small-town Chaeronea, “a small town, and I am happy to stay here to stop it becoming even smaller” (*Dem.* 2.2). And, preoccupied as we are with grand politics, we may lose touch with how often it was the local decisions that mattered most. The world of the emperor must often have seemed a long way away; it was affairs on one's doorstep that would more regularly change one's life, for good or for ill – provided that Plutarch's advice was taken, and Romans were kept from intervening more than they wished.

That piece of advice was still important, and it affected the lessons that the educated reader could draw from the past. Rich though *Advice* is in its gallery of examples drawn from classical Athens and Rome, Plutarch also emphasizes the need for discrimination in the morals one draws from them.

We laugh at small children when they try to pull on their fathers' boots and wear their crowns; but what of the leaders in the cities, when they stupidly stir up the ordinary people and encourage them to imitate their ancestors' achievements and spirit and exploits, even though those are all quite out of keeping with present circumstances? Their behavior may be laughable, but the consequences they suffer are no laughing matter. There are many other deeds of the Greeks of old which one may recount to mold the characters of the people of today and give them wisdom. At Athens, for instance, one might remind them not of their deeds of war, but of the nature of the amnesty decree under the Thirty; or of the way they fined Phrynichus for his tragedy about the fall of Miletus; or of how they wore crowns when Cassander refounded Thebes, but when they heard of the clubbing at Argos, with the Argives killing 1,500 of their fellow-citizens, they gave orders for a procession of purification around the whole assembly; or of the episode during the Harpalus affair, when they were searching the houses but passed by the one of the newly wedded bridegroom. Even now one can imitate these things, and make oneself like one's ancestors; as for Marathon and Eurymedon and Plataea, and all those examples which make the ordinary people swell up and fill them with shallow ostentation – we should leave them in the schools of the sophists. (*Advice on Public Life* 814a–c)

The positive examples there are not at all random, reinforcing the need for internal and inter-city concord and fellow-feeling and for emotional balance and restraint (Cook (2004)). No less discrimination was necessary in choosing the morals to be drawn from classical philosophy: we began by seeing how Dion, Cato, and Brutus all went wrong. Compromise, we see again, is always necessary, and so is an awareness of the uncomfortable realities of weakness and power. Yet that too is a lesson that could be learned from philosophy itself; it was indeed a lesson that Dion failed to learn from that warning of Plato himself. Plato also acknowledged that his ideal state might not be a practical possibility, and might simply be laid up in Heaven (*Resp.* 592b); he knew that Socrates was unsuited to take on his unscrupulous attackers (*Grg.* 486a–c, 511a–b, 521b–c). Socrates' monitory role might make him the only true "political person" for Plato, but if so that only underlines the gulf between idealism and practicality. But the disillusionment which the *Seventh Letter* expresses about involvement in politics (325e–326a) could never have been enough for Plutarch; he knew that, if one wanted to do good, one had a duty to engage. He was not wrong.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The Budé editions of *Should an Old Man* by Cuvigny (1984) and of *Advice on Public Life* by Carrière (1984) are very good; there are useful commentaries on *Advice* by Mittelhaus (1911) and Caiazza (1993) and on *Philosophers Should Talk Especially to Men of Power* by Roskam (2009). There is much of value also in Renoirte (1951). Older works tended to assume that Plutarch was following particular sources more extensively than is now thought likely: favorite candidates were Theophrastus (favored by Mittelhaus (1911) 29–55) or Ariston of Ceos or, for *Should an Old Man*, Cicero's *De senectute*. See Ziegler (1949) 182, 185–186 = (1951) 818–819, 821–822; Cuvigny (1984) 55–65; Carrière (1984) 25–29. His debt to Aristotle is discussed by Hershbell (2004) and Calero Secall (2004); Beneker (2012) ch. 1 is insightful on Plutarch's combination of elements from Platonic and from Aristotelian psychology. General treatments of Plutarch's political thought are offered by Weber (1959) and Aalders (1982). Jones (1971) 110–121, Desideri (1986), and Swain (1996) 161–186 are particularly helpful on the essays' relation to Plutarch's own time, Trapp (2004) on that to his broader ethical thinking, and Van Raalte (2005) on that to the *Lives*.

CHAPTER 11

Religion and Myth

Rainer Hirsch-Luipold

1. Religion

Plutarch's philosophical thought and personal actions express a deeply felt religiosity. The Delphic priest's religious emphasis is by no means confined to his religious writings proper (i.e. *De E apud Delphos*, *De Pythiae oraculis*, *De defectu oraculorum*, *De sera numinis vindicta*, *De genio Socratis*, *De Iside et Osiride*, and his early work *De superstitione*, which deals with religion in a more theoretical way). It extends throughout his *Moralia* and *Lives*. It characterizes also those writings devoted to more technical discussions pertaining to the philosophical schools, for example the interpretations of Plato (*De procreatione animae in Timaeo*; *Platonicae Quaestiones*, especially *Quaest. II*), and to the polemical works that attack the Stoics and Epicureans. In his *Quaestiones* works (*Quaestiones Romanae et Graecae*, *Quaestiones convivales*), Plutarch discusses extraordinary details encountered in religious practice or theological reasoning. We only have the titles of some of the table talks that deal with such themes: *Why Plato Said that God Always Practices Geometry* (VIII 2); *On Pythagorean Symbola* (VII 7); *Should One Wear Signet Rings Bearing Images of Gods or Wise Men?* (VI 9). The philosopher from Chaeronea presents a broad phenomenology of lived religion that includes not only mythology, but also rites, religious rituals, cultic images and symbols, iconography, and cultic architecture. His interest extends beyond the Greco-Roman realm to the religions of Egypt, Iran, and India, to Zoroastrianism and Judaism, to Chaldean astrologers, to the Magi, and to the gymnosophists. The various details he presents from different areas of religion make Plutarch one of the most important sources for the history of religion in the ancient world. He attributes philosophical significance to all of the aspects of these traditions in his own hermeneutics of images, which is based on Platonic ontology.

Religion for Plutarch is not only an interesting subject to contemplate or the stuff of colorful, variegated literary development, but rather it is a way of life as well as the driving force behind and substance of philosophical and theological inquiry. The philosophical quest for truth and religious experience are closely related. For many years Plutarch served as one of the two priests of Apollo at Delphi (*An seni* 792F; cf. 785C). Moreover he was initiated into the mysteries of Dionysus (*Cons. uxor.* 611D), and perhaps also in the mysteries of Isis (cf. *De Is. et Os.* 364E).

In various writings Plutarch takes lived religion as his literary as well as philosophical point of departure. He takes advantage of the narrative possibilities the dialogue affords to engage his readers in the religious dimensions of the problems under discussion. In the *Amatorius* the performance of sacrifices and prayers at the *Eros* festival in Thespieae provides the backdrop and cause for reflection on this god, to whom Plutarch ascribes an even more significant role than he has in Plato's *Symposium*: as a god he is humankind's guide to truth, salvation, and life. Plutarch erects a literary monument to the Oracle at Delphi in using the holy precinct as the scene of his *Pythian Dialogues*, as he himself calls them (*De E* 384E), works devoted to the exploration of religious and philosophical topics. The dialogue *On the Mysterious E at Delphi* takes place on the steps of the temple of Apollo. Along the lines of an extended *problema* (investigation), Plutarch offers different interpretations of this mysterious sign, which is also found on coins and was located immediately in front of the cella of the temple. In addition to pursuing the solution to this riddle of a traditional symbol, the discussion has a theological and even soteriological goal: it shows the way to assimilation to god through knowledge of god, by which death and transience are overcome. Plutarch thus shows in this dialogue how the Divine by means of a religious symbol opens up the way for people to seek him as the principle of being and truth. Like the *De E*, the dialogues *Why the Pythia No Longer Speaks in Verses* and *Oracles in Decline* are situated directly in the sanctuary of Delphic Apollo and focus on the oracle. Plutarch regards the oracular pronouncements of the Pythia as a special source of divine revelation. In *De Pythiae oraculis* he undertakes an apologetic defense of the oracle against accusations about the deficient literary quality of the Pythian dicta and the decline in oracular activity. Plutarch represents the discussion as taking place on the occasion of a tour of the votive offerings in the temple precinct at Delphi. The philosopher interprets the alleged signs of decline in a positive way by means of a discussion of aesthetics: the fact that the Pythia no longer speaks in verses (or at best in extremely poor ones) as well as her rural origin show that the outward appearance of the message should be ascribed to the Pythia as the instrument of the Delphic god, but that the content derives solely from the deity.

The oracle of Apollo at Delphi is thus a focal point of Plutarch's literary activity as well as his religious thought. Although Plutarch can no longer point to politically influential oracular prophecies and instead must voice the complaint that the oracle is flooded with banalities, the Delphic priest nevertheless does not miss the opportunity, even in the *Lives*, to focus attention on the historical significance of Apollo's oracle whenever he can. In a religio-historical interpretation Plutarch takes the resurgence of the Delphic oracle at the end of the first century CE to be an unambiguous sign that "such an incredible transformation in so short a time could not have come about through human intervention, unless God were present here and allowed the oracle to share in his divine inspiration" (*De Pyth. or.* 409C2–5). The author, through his protagonist Theon, addresses his

readers: “Indeed you yourselves see how many buildings have been erected that had not been there before, and how many have been rebuilt of those that had collapsed or been destroyed” (409A3–5). This “publicity campaign” by one of the most famous literary figures of his time may well have contributed significantly to the renewed flourishing of the oracle. A statue in honor of Plutarch with a corresponding dedication (*Syll.*³ 892a; 842) bears witness to the tremendous importance of the man who had served as the oracle’s priest for many years.

Plutarch seldom refers to his own cultic function embodied in his office as priest or to ritual practices in his home city of Chaeronea (*Quaest. Rom.* 267D; *Quaest. conv.* 693F). In general we learn little about the details of individual cultic ceremonies and rites. However, this does not indicate that Plutarch distanced himself from the cult. In fact Plutarch regarded sacrificial rituals, religious festivals, and the like as sources of joy in life that only atheists and the superstitious could not appreciate (*Non posse* 1002B–C; *De tranq. an.* 477C–D). In *De E apud Delphos* we find traces of controversies with his fellow priest, Nicander, about how the priesthood was to be interpreted.

The emphasis on religious matters in Plutarch’s writings corresponds to a personal religious and theological concern. Accordingly, Plutarch’s reflections on god and the divine do not find articulation in speculative metaphysics or doxographic systematization, but rather take the traditions of lived religion as their point of departure. Religious traditions lie at the heart of religious life and at the same time constitute the most profound source of the philosophical search for truth. Since Plutarch interprets the Platonic theory of forms as an account of the realm of the divine, the search for god and the quest for truth become essentially one and the same undertaking. In a profound way, religious tradition supplies traces of divine truth. Insofar as traditions such as the myth of Isis and Osiris, the mysterious E sign in front of the temple of Apollo in Delphi, or the Pythagorean symbols preserve ancient religious beliefs, they can – if interpreted philosophically – become a source of the knowledge of god, a source of a *theologia* as the pinnacle of every effort to attain truth.

Plutarch’s writings offer a panorama of the Greek pantheon, as we encounter it in the poets, especially Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, in tragedy and comedy, but also in the works of sculptors and painters. Certain individual gods are particularly prominent and appear as faces of the divine essence. The works of the Delphic priest reflect a special relationship to the oracle’s patron deity whom he calls his “friend Apollo” (*philos Apollōn*; *De E* 384E). Occasionally the preeminent place of Zeus the father of the gods is also encountered, but in most places it can be attributed to tradition and is markedly less pronounced than in Stoic writing. All the more striking is the place occupied by Eros, who is promoted by Plutarch to a central godhead, and Egyptian Osiris, whom Plutarch identifies with Dionysus (and with the divine *logos*).

Along with the Greek and Roman religions Plutarch explores intensively a series of foreign religions. The Delphic priest is so fascinated by Egyptian religion, its mythology, its symbols and rites, that he dedicates a detailed treatise to it (*De Iside et Osiride*). Egyptian theology offers him a philosophy set down in riddles (*ainigmatōdēs sophia*) that he seeks to highlight in a pictorial interpretation within the framework of an *interpretatio Platonica*. The text, still today one of the central sources of ancient Egyptian religion, contains numerous elements of cultic practice, ritual law, iconography, symbolism, language, etc. Plutarch’s knowledge is not only based on his readings of the relevant

classical literature on Egypt (such as, e.g., Hdt. 2.35–99); rather, he appears to have acquired his information first hand in conversation with Egyptian priests while traveling in Egypt. Plutarch's positive assessment of the Egyptian practice of animal worship is quite striking in view of the ridicule and disgust expressed by most authors. The hermeneutical remarks inserted in the beginning of the text are of great interest: in religious tradition, says Plutarch, the gods have bestowed upon mankind a share of the truth (about the divine) so as to quell human desire for divineness (*theiotētos orexis*, 351E). Myths, rites, and symbols are viewed as reflections of the divine truth within the corporeal world (345B–C). A Zoroastrian creation myth in this same work is used to explain evil in the world as the result of two opposing divine forces. However, Plutarch does not thereby abandon his fundamental conviction, that the divine is necessarily one, since he regards the evil principle as ontologically subordinate. It should therefore more properly be termed *daimon*. This asymmetrical dualism is resolved eschatologically, as Plutarch indicates at the end of the myth, when Hades will be defeated and humans will no longer cast shadows, nor require food (370C–D).

Plutarch also takes up the religion of the Jews in various ways, discussing their festivals and customs. He relates Judaism to the cult of Dionysus (*Quaest. conv.* 669B–672C), associating the Jewish *Sabbath* with the Dionysian *Sabboi* in his typical manner of etymological interpretation (*De Is. et Os.* 363C–D; *Quaest. conv.* 669E–671C; *Amat.* 771C; *De superst.* 166A; 169C; *De Stoic. rep.* 1051E). Although the details mentioned, i.e. the prohibition on eating pork, the clothing of the high priests, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Sabbath, hardly suggest that his information is derived first hand, his knowledge of Judaism does not appear to be as inaccurate as has often been thought. Moreover, these details appear to reflect elements of a common (and even in Jewish circles established) *interpretatio Graeca* of this religion which was foreign and at the same time exceptionally attractive for many educated Greeks on account of its aniconic cult. As an example of, in his view, unreasonable and damaging religious behavior, Plutarch cites the Jewish observance of the Sabbath in wartimes when the Jews, motionless as if “chained to one another by superstition,” as in an all-encompassing net, gave the enemy free rein (*De superst.* 169C). It should be observed as an oddity that the learned Plutarch, in spite of his education and his universal interest, never seems to have come across the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, and also seems to have no knowledge of the figure of Moses (in contrast to Numenius not long afterwards).

One encounters a clear affinity to Judeo-Christian thought in Plutarch's inclination toward a monotheistic conception of a personal god who is one and is called “father and maker of all things,” looking after man as a physician, judge, and mystagogue, as well as in the combination of the philosophical search for truth and metaphysical speculation with traditions of lived religion and in his ethics. This phenomenon still awaits historical explanation. However, one seeks in vain for any mention of Christianity. Maybe due to the social and intellectual niveau, this religious movement did not appear to him to merit discussion.

The investigation of various aspects of lived religion in Plutarch's works is inseparably bound up with his philosophical endeavor. For philosophy, which in Plutarch assumes a religious quality, has as its basis and aim the search for divine truth: “There is nothing that would be better for people to receive and for the gods more noble to grant than truth” (*De Is. et Os.* 351C–D). The truth which derives equally from religious and

philosophical traditions proves to be a gift since it leads the individual beyond the phenomenal world through assimilation to the divine (*De sera* 550C–D; cf. Pl. *Tht.* 176a). At the same time it provides man with the point of reference for a responsible life and perspective on salvation beyond the transitory nature of the body. This divine truth appears especially in religious myths and in customs, rites, and symbols inherited from the fathers. Such traditional material has to be interpreted “in a holy and philosophical way” (355C; see also 352A, 353D, 378A), and thus to be made the basis for the philosophical pursuit of truth. Plutarch takes it upon himself to collect these sparks of truth in various religious traditions, to interpret them and to integrate them into a new, coherent picture: “He collected traditional material (*historia*) as it were as the raw material for a philosophy that had theology, as he called it, as its aim” (*De def. or.* 410B). This characterization of the widely traveled Spartan Cleombrotus, a holy man (410A), reads like a program for Plutarch’s own religiously anchored philosophical method. He interprets in his unique pictorial and philosophical style the most diverse aspects of the world, especially religious symbols, rites, and customs as well as names and attributes of gods. At times this concerns details of iconography. The Phidian Aphrodite standing on a turtle (142D, 381E) allocates to women the home as the appropriate social space. The Cretan Zeus without ears indicates that it is not fitting for the master and ruler of the world to listen to anyone (381E). The representation of the Herms as old men with erect phalluses visualizes intellectual and political productivity even in old age (796E). As a result of this hermeneutical approach to religious iconography even the Egyptian animal cult appears to Plutarch to be an appropriate form of worship of the divine: the crocodile that is without a tongue shows, according to Plutarch, that the deity has no need of a voice for communication (381B). Moreover, one attributes to it the ability to see without being seen – a characteristic of the “first god” (*prōtos theos*, 381B). Similarly cobras, weasels, and dung beetles are interpreted as images of gods (381A). In light of these pictorial interpretations Plutarch in a rhetorical flourish carves out even an advantage of Egyptian animal worship over the Greek worship of chryselephantine statues: the decisive characteristic of the liveliness and vitality of the divine is represented in animals, whereas the Greek cult statues are made of inanimate material. However, it is decisive for the hermeneutics of religious symbols that images are not to be confused with the actual, divine essence, a reproach that applies as much to the physical allegoresis of the Stoa as it does to every superstitious or naïve worship of physical objects. It is not the images that are to be honored and worshipped, but “rather through these images the divine” (*to theion*; 382A). This makes it obvious that every cultic image is viewed by Plutarch ultimately as a *mimēma theou* (381B); i.e. an image of the divine, not that of a certain individual deity. In the realm of religious symbolism Plutarch dedicates a treatise of its own (*De E apud Delphos*) to the interpretation of the mysterious E sign located in front of the temple of Apollo. The interlocutors come forward with various interpretations representative of their respective philosophical positions. The young Plutarch, who is still enamored with mathematics, interprets the E as a numerical symbol for the number five and produces some speculations about the preeminent role of the number five. The next interpreter reads the sign in the spirit of Stoic logic symbolizing EI (the conditional particle meaning “if”). Later Plutarch’s teacher Ammonius assumes EI to be a second person singular present tense of *eimi*, “thou art”: entering the temple the devotee acknowledges with this address to the god that god is one, perfect and eternal. For true being, which

can only be attributed to the divine, implies absolute oneness. Only oneness guarantees incorruptibility, while everything that is of a compound nature and belongs to the sphere of becoming is necessarily destined to decay. The names of the gods are interpreted by Plutarch etymologically, as can be exemplified also in Plutarch's *De E*: Apollo is called "Pythios" as the god of those who begin to ask questions and seek the truth (*diapunth-anesthai*), "Delios" and "Phanaios" as the god of those to whom something of the truth has already been disclosed (*dēlousthai*; *hypophainesthai*; 385B–C). A similar hermeneutic is applied by the philosopher to rituals: when, in sacrificing to Hera as protectress of marriage, the gallbladder is not included in the sacrifice, but is instead thrown beneath the altar, this shows that there is no place for bitterness and rage in marriage (*Conj. praec.* 141E, fr. 157 Sandbach). The fact that the usual burial rites are not performed when a small child has died he regards in a Neopythagorean way as expressing the conviction that their souls were not yet attached to the earth (612A). The examples of corresponding interpretations could be multiplied at will.

The preoccupation with various traditions of lived religion serves above all a genuine theological interest. One and the same divine essence, says Plutarch in *De Iside et Osiride*, appears in various forms in all religions: we do not "think of the gods as different gods among different peoples, nor as barbarian gods and Greek gods, nor as southern gods and northern gods; but, just as the sun and the moon and the heavens and the earth and the sea are common to all, but are called by different names by different peoples, so for that one rationality which keeps all these things in order and the one Providence which watches over them and the ancillary powers that are set over all, there have arisen among different peoples, in accordance with their customs, different honors and appellations" (*De Is. et Os.* 377F). Accordingly Plutarch's *theologia* goes beyond instruction on the traditional gods, as found in the compendium by Cornutus. On account of this hermeneutical premise, Plutarch is able to combine traditional religious statements of different provenance so as to establish his own religio-philosophical train of thought. He uses "god" interchangeably with the name of a specific deity such as "Zeus" or "Apollo"; he oscillates between singular and plural (*theos–theoi*) as well as between masculine and neuter (*o theos–to theion*). The sun serves him as the image of different individual deities such as Apollo or Eros – and thus discloses the common reference point. In *De sera numinis vindicta* he speaks of "God" and of his intervention in the course of the world in an absolute sense, without referring to any specific religious system. This universalization of religion in Plutarch's works might be described as "polylatric monotheism": the multitude of approaches to traditional gods with their respective mythical and cultic embodiments in the end refer to one and the same divine essence. The many gods of myth and religion make manifest the divine One of philosophical speculation opening up an existential, personal relationship.

In Plutarch's work we encounter an elaborate theology that displays a clear move toward the unity and personality of the divine. Plutarch's god is the beginning of the world (*Quaest. conv.* VI 1, 685D; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 365B; *De E* 388D) and the principle of its good order (*De sera* 550D; cf. also *De E* 388D; *Quaest. conv.* I 2, 615F; *De fac.* 927B–C); this god is identified with the all-ruling *nous* or *logos*, and understood as the highest good. In a traditional way the divine is at times defined by negations: god is without needs (*Comp. Arist. et Cat. Mai.* 4) and without suffering (*De def. or.* 420E); in particular he does not know the passions of envy, fear, wrath, and hatred. He possesses

virtue in all its forms; especially justice is part of his nature (*De def. or.* 423D): indeed god is himself the law (*Ad princ. inerud.* 781A–B), just as he is the truth (781A). The divine is also associated with a multitude of personal predicates; god appears as leader and king (*De Is. et Os.* 383A; see also *Aet. Rom.* 268D), as master and ruler of all things (*De sera* 550A), as physician and savior (*Amat.* 765A), as a “leader of the initiated” (*mystagōgos*: 765A; cf. 378A, 477D–E) leading lovers out of Hades of this world to the realm of truth. In various places Plutarch discusses Plato’s designation of god as “father and creator” of all things (*Quaest. conv.* VIII 1, 718A; *Quaest. Plat.* II 1, 1001B). Plutarch’s god intervenes actively in history executing both punishment (cf. esp. *De sera*) and providence (*De def. or.* 426D). God’s goodness (*Non posse* 1102D) comes to benefit man in the form of *philanthropia* (*De superst.* 167D; *De gen.* 593A–B; *De Stoic. rep.* 1049B, 1051E); as a friend, god assists man both individually and collectively in the course of history. He communicates via prophecy and divination (especially at Delphi), via dreams, through *daimones*, etc. It is this topic of god’s beneficial intervention in the course of history and his communication with the individual that forms the link between the historical narration of the liberation of the Cadmea and the inserted philosophical discourse about Socrates’ *daimonion* in the *De genio Socratis*.

Plutarch promotes trust in this good, philanthropic, and just god. *Pistis* is encountered in his works with a meaning that comes close to the Christian concept of belief or faith. In light of the critique of knowledge by Academic skepticism, which derives from the fundamental inaccessibility of the intelligible realm of the divine, Plutarch propagates the “ancient belief inherited from the fathers” (*Amat.* 756B: *patrios kai palaia pistis*; cf. *Cons. uxor.* 612A–B; *De Pyth. or.* 402E) as the foundation of every philosophical effort to attain the truth. On account of the salvific role of the knowledge of god this is also the most promising, indeed the only possible path to life. With his cautious restraint in the last questions (*epochē, eulabeia*) Plutarch follows the tradition of Academic skepticism, but he transforms skeptical criticism into a critique of any absolute truth claim of human rationality, making room for religious argumentation: Since the final criteria of truth are removed from humans, negative judgments are also on principle no longer possible, such as those against divine justice presented by the speaker “Epicurus” in *On the Divine Vengeance*. Rather, under the premise of the time-honored truths about the gods, the philosopher’s task is to render plausible the actual experience of god in the course of the world. In this way Plutarch establishes a hermeneutics of faith in the religious tradition.

The religious aesthetics here established rest on the hermeneutical revaluation of Platonic discourse on the image-based character of the phenomenal world. “The physical world of becoming is an image of being in matter, and that which has come into being is a picture of reality” (*eikōn gar estin ousias en hylē genesis kai mimēma tou ontos to ginomenon*; *De Is. et Os.* 372F–373A), “a perceptible image of the intelligible cosmos” (*De Is. et Os.* 373B). In taking seriously the image-like nature of the world and especially of religious tradition, Plutarch’s hermeneutics of images permit access to the world of the divine, which grants an epistemological value to the traditions of lived religion, in addition to their religious value. The world with all its phenomena is conceived as a temple full of images of the divine, as any Greek temple would have them. “The universe is a most holy temple and most worthy of god; into it man is introduced through birth as a spectator, not of handmade or immovable images, but of all the sensible representations of knowable things that the divine mind, says Plato (cf. *Tim.* 92c; *Epin.* 984a),

has revealed, representations which have innate within themselves the beginnings of life and motion, sun and moon and stars, rivers which ever discharge fresh water, and earth which sends forth nourishment for plants and animals. Since life is an initiation into these things and a most perfect ritual celebration of them, it should be full of tranquility and joy” (*De tranq. an.* 477C–D; translation following Helmbold with some alterations). With this statement the cult is transferred into daily life, as a quotidian form of divine service: as humans we are supposed to celebrate every day of our lives as a festival of the gods. Plutarch, in connecting the traditional religious world of symbols with philosophical interpretation, renders religion the basis of striving for understanding and personal happiness.

It is not by chance that this statement forms the concluding climax of Plutarch’s treatise *On the Tranquility of the Soul* (*De tranq. an.*). Religion is for Plutarch a central aspect of the art of living (*technē peri bion*; *Quaest. conv.* I 1, 613B); it is a companion in ethical matters as well as in all aspects of daily life; in particular, however, it provides consolation in the face of human mortality (cf. esp. the letter of consolation addressed to his wife Timoxena at the premature death of their daughter) and opens up a perspective beyond death. Religion and cultic ritual thus serve as an unparalleled source of joy in life (*Non posse* 1101E; similarly *De superst.* 169D; *Num.* 8; in the entire passage *Non posse* 1100F–1102A Plutarch speaks of a joy deriving from the gods which he contrasts with Epicurus’ superficial and damaging desire; this joy is fueled, according to the anti-Epicurean point in 1102B, by the presence of god, without which the priest would remain simply a butcher).

The following theological topics are addressed accordingly: the foundations of a rational belief in god; the possibilities of salutary contact between god and the world, and the access of human knowledge to the realm of divine truth as well as a way of life pleasing to god and advantageous to mankind through divine guidance (ontology and image hermeneutics, doctrine of the soul, daemonology, divination); the origin of the world and of the soul, and the view of god as creator and prescient guardian; the origin of evil in the world and its relationship to the all-ruling god. Developed in the Academic school tradition since Xenocrates, the doctrine of the *daimones* whose sphere is located between god and the human world is applied by Plutarch to different phenomena that do not allow themselves to be allotted to either realm. These include incorporeal souls as well as the personal protective spirit of a Caesar and the “evil spirit” (*kakos daimōn*) of a Brutus who announced the latter’s demise with his ominous prophecy “at Philippi you will see me again” (*Caes.* 69.5–13; later rendered famous by Shakespeare). Dreams, prophecies, and visions, of which Plutarch makes use in the *Lives* as well as in the *Moralia*, are effected by *daimones*. The power of evil and destruction in the world can also be qualified as “*daimon*.” In the service of a theodicy it is thus viewed as second principle independent of the divine, as a power of darkness, destruction, and death in combat with the divine, but a principle that nevertheless does not stand ontologically on a level with the divine and therefore, according to Plutarch, should be designated as *daimon* rather than as a second god (*De Is. et Os.* 369D–E; *De E* 394A; cf. *De lat. viv.* 1130A; *De an. procr.* 1026B). We are dealing here, therefore, with an asymmetrical dualism (see above). A further concern of Plutarch’s religious philosophy is the overcoming of human mortality and a doctrine of the soul’s continued existence after death (including the concept of rewards and punishments in the hereafter).

The Delphic priest welcomes piety of all shades as long as it does not come to be diverted into a superstitious act. Plutarch identifies piety as knowledge of the correct worship of god (*Aem. Paul.* 3.4). On the other hand, he rejects atheism as well as a superstitious fear of the gods. He explores both in the rhetorically stylized early work, *Against a Superstitious Fear of the Gods* (*De superstitione*), that stands out as a religious theoretical work in Plutarch's oeuvre. This work presents a *synkrisis* between the superstitious fear of the gods and atheism. Plutarch argues for the Aristotelian middle path of piety to be sought between excessive fear and rejection of the gods (see Becchi in this volume). In the course of this work Plutarch critically examines various religious customs. The work thus is a critique of religiosity gone astray, not a critique of religion as such. In rhetorical stylization Plutarch here represents superstition, which appears to him to be a depraved form of belief, as the greater evil, inasmuch as, due to its misunderstanding of the divine, it even leads to atheism. A superstitious fear of the gods is to be condemned as an especially damaging *pathos*: it cannot be escaped, because one carries it in oneself; not even the temples offer asylum in that situation. But even more: superstition is to be qualified also as *anosion* (impious), in that it paints an image of god that is contrary to the benevolent nature of the divine (*De superst.* 167D; *Non posse* 1102D; *De Stoic. rep.* 1049B, 1051E). Such a misunderstood fear of god robs life of all joy, but especially of the joy supplied by religion. Like an eye disease, says Plutarch, it needs to be cured, but to be sure one must avoid destroying the eye at the same time by casting oneself into the arms of godlessness (*Non posse* 110C; cf. *De Is. et Os.* 355D). As the comparison shows, Plutarch takes aim at pathological forms of religious belief and practice in order to promote a sound form of piety. In Plutarch's other works, atheism, mainly in the guise of Epicurus' teaching, is characterized as a way of life that ruins the individual as well as the communal life and robs people of the hope of a salvific future. Although every belief requires critical reflection, it forms in turn, as a divine gift (*De Is. et Os.* 1–2), the basis and critique of all human rationality, of every system of ethics, and of every flourishing human community from the institution of marriage to the state itself (*Adv. Col.* 1125E; see Kechagia-Ovseiko and Tsouvala in this volume).

2. Myth

The mythic traditions of various peoples and religions are incorporated into the historical narratives of Plutarch's *Lives* as well as the religious and philosophical argumentation of his *Moralia*. He wrote biographies of the mythical heroes Theseus as well as the first Roman kings Romulus and Numa. From a religio-historical point of view the myth of *Isis and Osiris*, quoted at length and furnished with an extended commentary, is the most prominent example (*De Is. et Os.* 12–21): Plutarch discusses classical methods of exegesis (euhemeristic, demonological, allegorical) and then goes on to present his own Platonist interpretation, incorporating also other elements of Egyptian religion (rites, symbolism, iconography) and even a Zoroastrian creation myth (*De Is. et Os.* 46–47).

Plutarch not only recounts traditional myths but also walks in Plato's footsteps in many of his writings as a composer of eschatological myths. He inserts these artificial myths of his own composition in the philosophical discussion in *De sera numinis vindicta*, *De genio Socratis*, and *De facie in orbe lunae*. In different ways all three myths revolve

around the border between life and death, the transition from the one realm to the other as well as the fate of souls after death. Accordingly, Thespesius (*De sera* 563B–568F) as well as Timarchus (*De gen.* 589F–592E) experience visions on the threshold of death. The vision of Thespesius in *De sera* can be classified virtually as a near-death experience. After falling from a great height the young man, who had led a thoroughly reprehensible life up to this point, loses consciousness for three days while his soul undertakes a journey to the heavenly realm; he awakens only when he is about to be buried. His soul receives a guide on its journey to the heavenly sphere, a relative who had already died in his childhood. It observes there the fate of the souls of the deceased in their various regions and at their diverse stages.

Something similar happens to Timarchus, a young man of good family in Chaeronea, who cherishes philosophic ambitions (590A–B). He brings himself near to death by his own design, climbing down to the oracle of Trephonius in order to learn something about the power and efficacy of Socrates' *daimonion*. He remains there for two nights and is already being mourned by his relatives who assume that he is dead. What had happened? After a time of meditation in the darkness it appeared to him as if he sustained a severe blow to the head; his skull appeared to open and his soul rose out of it (590B). On his journey to the hereafter he is addressed by a voice, apparently a *daimon*, and asked what he wishes to know. At this juncture Timarchus appears to forget his original concern: "Everything," he answers. This, however, exceeds even the knowledge of the *daimones*. But at least they can provide information about their own nature in the intermediate world of the moon and about their tasks in communication with humans.

These visions are characterized by unique aesthetic touches, especially by experiences of light and a multitude of different colors, as befits the sphere of the sun and moon, which here constitutes the realm of the souls of the dead. Amazing sounds and divine scents are emitted that reveal emphatically both the joys and the punitive aspects of life in the hereafter.

The myth of Sulla (*De fac.* 940F–945D) is introduced somewhat differently. In a way similar to the mysterious account of the death of the great Pan in *De def. or.* 17, which likewise could be counted as an instance of Plutarchan *mythopoiesis*, a wise man reports the lessons that he is supposed to have received in a distant land from the *daimones*. Stylistically, therefore, what we learn here resembles the typical contributions to Plutarchan dialogues: it is not a heavenly vision that is recounted, but instead the scientific cosmological and astronomical view of the work is crossed with an anthropological interpretation, insofar as the moon appears as the transit station for the souls separated from bodies, from which point the human mind undertakes the return path to the sun as the realm of the divine *nous*. This account is nevertheless mythical inasmuch as it treats materially a sphere that is removed from certain knowledge and therefore can only be treated sensibly by a *daimon*. Another myth concludes the anti-Epicurean treatise *De latenter vivendo*. It differs from the other myths, however, in that it is not related by one of the participants in the dialogue but rather is reported as part of the argument.

These original creations of Plutarch lead the reader in a visionary way into a realm that is impenetrable to descriptive discourse: the world of the divine and the hereafter. As Plato had already made clear, mythic discourse assumes importance where discourse *kata logon* reaches its boundaries and only a "probable myth" (*Tim.* 29a–d) can be presented. In questions regarding the theory of god, creation, daemonology, and in the end with

regard to all questions transcending the realm of the corporeal to the realm of pure truth, especially *vis-à-vis* the question of the fate of the soul after death, mythic discourse opens up a way forward.

The Plutarchan myths continue the argumentation of the dialogue by other means. To argue for the justice of god despite the fact that some evildoers evidently live well up to the end of their lives requires a horizon beyond earthly life. Accordingly the myth in *De sera* depicts visions of the most horrible punishments in the hereafter: the souls of the dead are to be seen there, upon which their vices and misdeeds are visible like weals in revolting colors that are now brushed out in the most painful way; souls that are reworked, filed, hammered, and bent, thrown into fire and finally into tempering water. Most brutal of all and probably most terrifying in the context of ancient shame culture, however, are the visions of social punishment that afflicts all those who on earth have not suffered any punishment at all: the parents stand naked with all their offenses before their children who in their lives must suffer punishment for all of their parents' disgraceful deeds; they have no opportunity to hide anything, they are delivered defenseless to the charges of their own children. The pragmatics of such depictions consist, however, in their ethical impact on the living (one may consider in comparison the account of the rich man and the poor Lazarus in Luke 16). Plutarch already weaves this intended ethical impact into the background narrative of the myth. When the one who had been thought dead returns to life, he experiences a total transformation to an ethically exemplary life, to the great amazement of all who had known him previously as a reprehensible man. In the work *On the Daimonion of Socrates* (*De genio Socratis*), Plutarch represents with the aid of the historical narrative on the liberation of the Cadmea in Thebes how the divine communicates with exceptional individuals by means of the *daimones*: as Plutarch narrates the story, it exemplifies the involvement of the divinity in directing events toward the good through different signs. In the life of the individual an intervention of this type can be shown in a special way with respect to Socrates' *daimonion*; in the hereafter, *daimones* aid those individuals who are far advanced in their development so as to eventually smooth the path to the moon as the place of rest, thus they escape a further rebirth. At this point the myth of *On the Face in the Moon* (*De facie in orbe lunae*) ties in, even if caution should be exercised in wanting to systematize Plutarch's myths: while the overall topic of the work is the physical composition of the moon, the myth talks about the moon as the place of the souls and concludes the cycle of being of the souls: after the souls have found their way to the moon, the power of the intellect (*nous*) is now separated on the moon in a "second death" from the soul and returns to the sun, their divine point of origin (942F–943B).

Myth assumes in Plutarch its own religious (and at the same time epistemological) dignity. This becomes clear at the beginning of *On the Obsolescence of the Oracle* (*De def. or.* 409E–F). Plutarch introduces it with a referent to the mythic tradition (*mythologousin*): Two eagles or swans are said to have flown off once upon a time from the opposite ends of the earth and met at the so-called navel of the world in Delphi. Someone, as Plutarch continues, had wanted to test this myth of the preeminence of the oracle, that is to say, its truthfulness or veracity, and for this reason asked the god himself. He received a mysterious and disapproving answer, according to Plutarch an indication that the divinity is opposed to putting a time-honored myth (*mythos palaios*) to the test. In what follows

he places alongside this myth, in a conspicuous parallelism of mythical and historical tradition, a story of two holy men who likewise have come from the ends of the earth and have just met in Delphi – so as to now become participants in the dialogue that ensues. Myth represents a form of narrative philosophizing; Plutarch regards it as a fundamental element of philosophy. As a form of religious discourse, it follows its own logic, which transcends the sphere of the discoverable. That which is seen in visions or which is invested with the credibility of age-old religious tradition rests on truth and therefore appears to be an indispensable supplement to the line of argumentation (*De sera* 563B; *De gen.* 589F–590A). Mythical and historical narrative support and interpret each other mutually. Accordingly Plutarch also in his *Lives* treats mythical and historical material with a view to its veracity in no fundamentally different way. Myth neither says simply the same thing with other words so that one could decide between *mythos* and *logos*, nor is myth concerned to work up what remains after arguments have been presented. Mythic discourse functions neither as a linear progression nor as a reduplication of *logos* but in a categorically other way. Thus myth achieves simultaneously that “priestly-prophetic urgency” that Görgemanns ((1994) 73) encounters in the Platonic myths. It is represented vividly in the example of the wondrous transformation of the (reprehensible) Aridaeus into the (divine) Thespesius in *De sera numinis vindicta*.

Interestingly, Plutarch can claim this special dignity of the mythical for those myths of his own creation. He thus has the Pythagorean Theanor in *De genio* call the story of Timarchus’ afterlife, which he here emphatically names a *logos*, a “holy and inviolable” offering to the gods (593A).

Plutarch plays with the relationship between mythical and logical narrative – like Plato before him – in the introductions to myths of his own creation: as the main speaker of the dialogue, Plutarch says in *De sera numinis vindicta* (561B) that he has yet another story (*logos*) to tell that he claims to have recently heard. Nevertheless he fears that it could appear to some to be a myth. When the participants do not wish to applaud the discursive presentation alone (563B), so that they may not appear to regard it as sufficient proof, and instead insist that he should tell the promised myth, Plutarch finally gives in. Similarly in *De genio Socratis*: When Simmias cautiously considers passing over in silence the myth of Timarchus in the discussion of Socrates’ *daimonion*, since it resembles more closely a mythical presentation than logical argumentation, this is rejected by Theocritus: myth also touches on the truth in its own way (589F; cf. *De sera* 561B; *Pl. Grg.* 523a).

Plutarch also reflects theoretically upon the relationship of *logos* and *mythos*, especially prominent in the hermeneutical passages in *De Iside et Osiride* as well as in *De gloria Atheniensium*. *Logos* and *mythos* appear as two parts of one and the same discourse on truth, just as Plutarch conceives of the scientific perception and the mythical religious interpretation of the world as two sides of the same coin. They are not simply identical, but they also must not be separated. Their interrelationship is not simply disclosed to the reader. Rather, he has to investigate it. In the *On the Daimonion of Socrates* the reader has to find the logical connections between the historical narrative of the liberation of the Cadmea (with the embedded philosophical discussion about Socrates’ *daimonion* and the communication between the divine and the individual) and the voyage of the soul related in the Timarchus myth. In the *De facie* Plutarch attaches a myth to the scientific discussions which represent the state of science in his time (the astronomer

Kepler still considered the work so essential that he edited it with his own translation into Latin and with an astronomical commentary; cf. Görgemanns (1970) 13–15, 157–161). This myth, as we have seen, conceives of the moon as the abode for souls (*psychai*) that are separated from bodies. In an astonishing way the scientific discussion of the nature of the moon and a mythical religious interpretation of the world in terms of cosmic anthropology are connected together in this work. Scientific and pictorial mythic reflections are not translatable into one another; they interlock and supplement each other. The text of *De facie* thus provides a key of sorts to Plutarch's thought if one seizes upon the tension: Is the heavenly body of the sun to be identified as the location of divine *nous* and is the sun therefore ultimately the divine itself? At any rate, according to Plutarch, the sun comes close to the essence of the divine like nothing else within the perceptible world. On the other hand, whoever thinks that they have found an immanent god is sharply rebuked, since Plutarch firmly maintains the principal difference between the corporeal and earthly world of becoming and passing away, and the world of divine being. In all myths created by Plutarch the task of the reader consists in investigating the exact connection and context of the mythic and scientific discussion.

In two works (*De sera*, *De facie*) these artificial myths form the conclusion of the discussion and in this way leave it up to the reader to arrive at an interpretation. By consciously leaving open the interpretation of the myth, the philosopher implicitly compels the reader to pursue further the horizons that have been opened up.

This special dignity, however, cannot be claimed for every form of mythical or myth-like tradition. Plutarch resumes Plato's criticism of myth and opposes an unreflective anthropomorphic conception of god as well as maintaining ethically unacceptable action on the part of the gods (*De superst.* 167D, 170B–C; cf. *De frat. amor.* 489B). Occasionally *mythos* bears the deprecatory connotation of a “discourse without truth content” (Hardie (1992) 4744; cf. *De fort. Rom.* 321B; *De def. or.* 420B; *Rom.* 2). This pejorative tone accompanies especially the adjective *mythōdēs* (*De Is. et Os.* 353E; *De Pyth. or.* 406E). Pure fictions (*plasmata*; *De Is. et Os.* 358F; *De sera* 557F) are the fabrications of poets who, as Plutarch says, spin their tales out of themselves like spiders their webs (*De Is. et Os.* 358E–F). In this sense the mythical can actually be contrasted with or opposed to the “true” and some mythical tales are criticized as “drivel.”

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Still the most comprehensive treatment of different aspects of religion is found in the contributions of Brenk (1977) and (1987). Much recent scholarship on Plutarch's views on religion has been published in collections of papers (Gallo (1996); Hirsch-Luipold (2005); Van der Stockt et al. (2010); Roig Lancillotta and Gallarte (2012)). The philosophical reading of the religious traditions in Plutarch figures prominently in Van Nuffelen (2011).

CHAPTER 12

Poetry and Education

Ewen Bowie

1. Introduction

That Plutarch's family was established in Boeotian Chaeronea when he was born in the late 40s CE, rather than in any other Greek city of the Roman Empire, probably made little difference to the constituents of his education. Nor would these have been very different had he been born 250 years earlier or 250 years later. The basic pattern and components of Hellenistic education seem not to have differed much from one place to another and to have changed remarkably little over many centuries.¹ The texts to which a boy was introduced first by a *grammatistēs*, then by a *grammaticus*, were chiefly Homer and Euripides in poetry and Demosthenes and the other Attic orators in prose, with Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Menander playing a secondary role in verse, as did Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plato in prose.

In Plutarch's case his instruction by his schoolmasters will have been reinforced by the educated environment of his home, and especially by his father Autobulus, whose cultured personality comes across in the several *Sympotic Questions* in which he figures (see Klotz in this volume). Through Autobulus' connections with Delphi the young Plutarch will have encountered many visitors at that site of Greco-Roman tourism and pilgrimage, and some of these will have been writers, teachers, or critics of Greek and Latin literature. He will certainly have encountered philosophers and sophists, scholars and critics, and writers in many genres of prose and poetry when he went to Athens in his later teens for a philosophical education, chiefly with the Platonist Apollonius (on whom see Jones (1966a)). Doubtless the twin influences of Delphi and Athens extended his literary horizons in a way and to a degree that would have been unlikely had his birthplace been far from any major cultural center – for example the Cappadocian cities of Tyana or Caesarea, the origins respectively of Philostratus' rebarbative first-century sage Apollonius and second-century sophist Pausanias.

Plutarch's progressive engagement with philosophy, which became the core of his intellectual life, raised problems about the reading of poetry which was central not only to young people's education, but also to the elite culture of adults. One of many testimonies to the place of poetry in both elite education and adult displays of elite culture is an epigraphic text from Aphrodisias of the year 127 CE which records the appreciation of Halicarnassus for a poet from Aphrodisias, C. Iulius Longianus: he had given "diverse performances" (*epideixeis poikilas*) in Halicarnassus "through which he both delighted the old and benefited the young" and it had been voted that his books should be acquired by the state for its libraries "so that the young might also be educated in these too in the same way as they are also educated in the writings of the ancients" (*MAMA* viii 418 col. ii 2–4, 14–18, re-edited Roueché (1993) 88).

Plato, however, had perceived Homer's apparent endorsement of gods' immoral behavior and Attic tragedians' formulation of arguments in favor of wicked behavior to be spoken by mythological figures on stage as threats to the development of a just character. His own epistemological theory of "ideas" added fuel to his criticism of poets by branding their representations of the world as defective because they were based not on the "ideas" he postulated as perfect and unchanging but on the ephemeral and mutable imitations of these "ideas" found in the material world. Admiration for Greek poetry of the Archaic and Classical period was too deeply embedded in the Greek and Roman cultural norms of Plutarch's time for its blanket rejection to be a viable educational strategy. A middle way had to be chosen, and the nature of Plutarch's compromise (by no means unique to him) can be found in his *How a Young Man Should Listen to Poets*, setting out how a young reader or audience should handle the potentially corrupting influence of poetry. To this central text I return below. First, however, I want to attempt to sketch the range of poetry with which his writings show Plutarch was familiar, a range that is in some respects predictable given the general educational curriculum and his own commitment both to theoretical moral philosophy and to leading an examined, moral life, but a range which nevertheless has a few surprises.

2. The Evidence of Quotation

The problem of deciding how much literature Plutarch knew, and by what avenues, is insoluble. What we can do, however, is make some assessment of the texts that Plutarch lets his readers know that he could call on, whether to attest a fact, to exemplify a *gnome* or a trait of character, or simply as decor, i.e. as giving dignity or solemnity to the expression of an idea that could well have been formulated (and often *was* formulated alongside his quotation) in Plutarch's own words.² Given that the total number of Plutarch's citations of poetic and prose texts is around 7,000, my assessment will necessarily be selective, and it will consider only poetic texts: prose texts, especially the works of philosophers and sometimes of historians, are also cited extensively by Plutarch, but they are often used differently from poetic texts,³ and they did not raise the ethical problems that have been noted above as bound up with the supposed effects of hearing or reading poetry.

It is no surprise that Homer is by far the most cited poet: given that allusion is usually harder to establish than citation, there is no way of attaining precise figures for Plutarch's

use of an author so omnipresent, but together Homeric citations and allusions exceed five hundred.⁴ Nor is it a surprise that the next most frequently cited poet is Euripides, with close on two hundred citations in the *Moralia* and around thirty-six in the *Lives*. No other poet comes near Euripides. Of the Attic dramatists Aeschylus comes in next, at around fifty-seven in *Moralia* and eight in the *Lives*,⁵ then Sophocles with around forty-one in the *Moralia* and around fifteen in the *Lives*,⁶ and finally Menander with thirty-nine in the *Moralia* and a mere three in the *Lives*. Attic Old Comedy, which was to be read more attentively by some educated Greeks as the standards for writing supposedly pure Attic Greek were raised during the second century CE, was less congenial to Plutarch than New Comedy, for reasons set out in his *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* and in *Sympotic Questions* 7.8.3 = *Mor.* 711 F–712 D (in the context of that question's topic, "What are the best entertainments during dinner?," cf. Russell (1972) 53). Not surprisingly, therefore, in the *Moralia* citations from Old Comedy to support an argument or simply for decor are fewer than those from New Comedy – around sixteen from Aristophanes, five from Eupolis, and just one from Cratinus (though doubtless more remain unidentifiable among unattributed comic fragments). By contrast Plutarch's fifth-century Athenian *Lives* make regular use of Old Comedy as evidence for political events and figures – a dozen citations from Aristophanes, five from Eupolis – just as the essay *On the Glory of Athens* draws once on Cratinus.

Among the melic poets Plutarch's preferences are less standard, but nevertheless largely explicable. His fellow Boeotian Pindar is cited or alluded to around sixty times in the *Moralia* (about as often as the philosopher-poet Empedocles) and around ten in the *Lives* (cf. Cannatà Fera (2004)). Pindar cites not just the *Epinicians*, which have come down to us in a continuous tradition, but *Paeans* (e.g. *Paeon* 4.50–52, at *On Exile* 7–9 = *Mor.* 602A–603B, see below); *Dithyrambs* (fr. 78 at *Brotherly Love* 483D and *The Glory of Athens* 7 = *Mor.* 349C; fr. 77 four times – *ibid.* 350A, *Delayed Divine Punishment* 6 = *Mor.* 552B, *The Mean-Spiritedness of Herodotus* 34 = *Mor.* 867C and *Themistocles* 8.2); *Hyporchēmata* (fr. 107ab at *Sympotic Questions* 9.15 = *Mor.* 748BC); *Thrēnoi*, "Dirges" (fr. 128f at *Stoic Contradictions* 1 = *Mor.* 1057D; fr. 129, 131a, 131b, all from the same poem, at *Consolation to Apollonius* 35 = *Mor.* 120; fr. 130 at *Living Unknown* 7 = *Mor.* 1130C). Plutarch has no citations from the sometimes erotic *encōmia*, unless they are among those fragments unattributable to a particular book of the Alexandrian edition (fr. 140bc, 153, 187, 199, 207, 210, 211, 212, 220, 228, 234).

By contrast Pindar's near-contemporary and rival Bacchylides can be identified as cited only once in the *Moralia* – precisely in *How to Listen to Poets* (Bacchylides 1.21 at 14 = *Mor.* 36c) – and twice in one *Life*, the *Numa* (fr. 27 at 4.11 and *Paeon* fr. 4.69–77 at 20.6, both for decor). Plutarch's citation of two different pieces of Bacchylides in one *Life* perhaps counts against his source being an anthology (see Bowie (2008a) 147). Doubtless more unidentified Bacchylides lurks in the many fragments of melic poetry cited without their author being named, but it is easy to suspect that Plutarch's *campanilismo* reinforced the persistent view (expressed for example by Plutarch's probable contemporary, the author of *On the Sublime*, 33.5) that Bacchylides was much inferior to Pindar – note also two generations later Aelius Aristides' great admiration for Pindar, though perhaps for particular reasons, as argued by Bowie (2008b).

On the other hand, Bacchylides' uncle, Simonides of Ceos, has some thirty-five citations spread over a wide range of works in the *Moralia*, though admittedly six of

these are from Plutarch's squib *On the Mean-Spiritedness of Herodotus*: it looks as if for this work Plutarch combed Persian War poems both in an edition of Simonides and in a collection of Simonidean epigrams,⁷ even though for Persian War sections of his fifth-century Greek *Lives* he made less use of Simonides: his citation in his demolition of Herodotus (42 = *Mor.* 872D) of six lines from Simonides' elegiac poem on the battle of Plataea in 479 BCE is crucial in establishing that two rolls of papyrus from second-century CE Oxyrhynchus are copies of a book of Simonides' elegiac poetry (fr. 10–22 West *IE*², cf. Boedeker and Sider (2001)). Simonides may also have commended himself as a serious moral thinker, something Plutarch might have decided on the basis of Plato's discussion of fr. 542 *PMG* in his dialogue *Protagoras* 339A–346D, a fragment Plutarch himself cites three times (*Spiritual Contentment* 470D, *Brotherly Love* 485C, and *Sympotic Questions* 743F). Plutarch's liking for Simonides is one of many reasons for thinking that we are especially unlucky to have no book of Simonides preserved as a whole or even in substantial part in continuous transmission or, at least hitherto, on papyrus.

By contrast modern taste does not rate Timotheus very highly, yet Plutarch offers ten citations in the *Moralia* and four in the *Lives*, whereas from early choral melic poets now much admired he offers very little. An Alcman cosmogonic fragment (57.1 *PMGF*) is cited three times: at *Sympotic Questions* 3.10.3 = *Mor.* 659B, at *Natural Explanations* 24 = *Mor.* 918A, and at *The Face on the Moon* 25 = *Mor.* 940A. Fr. 41 *PMGF* on Sparta's combination of war and culture is cited twice, at *The Fortune of Alexander* 2 = *Mor.* 335A and at *Life of Lysurgus* 21.6. Fr. 64 *PMGF* on *Tyche* is cited at *The Fortune of Rome* 4 = *Mor.* 318A. From Stesichorus too only three pieces are cited: fr. 219 *PMGF* on Clytemnestra's dream in *Delayed Divine Punishment* 10 = *Mor.* 555A; fr. 232 *PMGF* on Apollo's love of festivities in *The E at Delphi* 21 = *Mor.* 394B; fr. 225 *PMGF* on the dolphin on Odysseus' shield in *Cleverness of Animals* 36 = *Mor.* 985B.

Love poetry understandably fares no better, with the exception of Sappho, almost always named when cited.⁸ That Plutarch might have been especially concerned about the capacity of Sappho's poetry to corrupt is indicated by a remark he puts in the mouth of his friend the "philosophical" poet Sarapion: "Don't you see," he said, "what charm the songs of Sappho have as they bewitch and seduce their audience" (*On the Oracles at Delphi* 6 = *Mor.* 397A). Three of his citations of Sappho are of the celebrated fr. 31, used to illustrate the symptoms of Antioch's desire for Stratonice (in the *Life of Demetrius* 38.4) and the strength of a lover's passion (*On Desire* [*Erōtikos*] 18 = *Mor.* 762F–763A), but also, bizarrely, a young man's excitement at his philosophical progress (*Progress in Virtue* 11 = *Mor.* 81D). *On Desire* (5 = *Mor.* 751D) also has a curious citation of fr. 49 to exemplify the sexual sense of *charis*, "favor." The remaining quotations are the vituperative fr. 55, cited both to conclude *Marriage Advice* (48 = *Mor.* 146A) and in *Sympotic Questions* (3.1.1 = *Mor.* 646EF), and fr. 158, exploited in *Restraining Anger* 7 = *Mor.* 456E. Sappho fr. 130 may also be alluded to in the word *glykypikron*, "bitter-sweet," at *Sympotic Questions* 5.7.2 = *Mor.* 681B.

Plutarch's *On Desire* also has his only citation of erotic words of Anacreon (fr. 444 *PMG* at 4 = *Mor.* 751a) whose love poetry he twice mentions together with Sappho's (*Virtues of Women* introduction, 243B, *Sympotic Questions* 8.8.2 = *Mor.* 711D). Citation in *Common Ideas* (20 = *Mor.* 1068B) of two lines of Anacreon without overt erotic content (fr. 425 *PMG*) shows that Plutarch knew at least the opening of another poem,

while Anacreon's reference to Artemon cited in the *Pericles* (27.4) came to Plutarch from Heraclides of Pontus. A remark in his introduction to his *Pericles* (2.1) shows his ambivalence: no talented young man would want to be Pheidias or Polyclitus because he admired their statues, or to be Anacreon, Philetas, or Archilochus because pleased by their poetry.

Not unpredictably, then, Ibycus is cited in the *Moralia* only in *Sympotic Questions*, and not for his love poetry: fr. 303(b) at 8.3.5 = *Mor.* 722D for his epithet *klytos*, "glorious," for early dawn, and fr. 310 (perhaps known to Plutarch from Plato's *Phaedrus* 242cd) at the closural 9.15.2 = *Mor.* 748C to add decor to his condemnation of pantomime. In the *Lives* he is cited once (fr. 339, *Comparison of Lysurgus and Numa* 3.6) for Spartan girls' display of their thighs. Plutarch's only citation of Mimnermus is of fr. 1 West *IE*, dismissed in *Progress in Moral Virtue* (445F) as the words of the sexually uncontrolled (*akolastoî*). There are very few quotations of Hellenistic epigram, none of them of erotic epigram.

On the basis of Plutarch's quotations, then, we might conclude that he was fairly widely read in those texts of early and classical Greek poetry which preservation in continuous manuscript traditions and on papyri and citation by other cultivated Greeks in the first three centuries CE show to have been canonical (cf. Bowie (1997), (2000), (2004), (2008a), (2008b), (2009)). But there is almost certainly a large and perhaps unbridgeable gap between what is on show in quotations and allusions and Plutarch's personal preferences and reading habits. In general a self-conscious writer like Plutarch will allow us to see what he wants us to see, and in particular cases the choice of one genre or author rather than another must have been influenced by the point in Plutarch's argument that he wanted to support or illustrate. We have rather more than the tip of an iceberg, but we do not really know how different was the profile of his reading as a whole from what we detect by his quotations and allusions. It is indeed possible that he read more than once such sexually explicit sequences of the iambic poets Archilochus and Hipponax as papyri have preserved for us (a detail in *How a Young Man Should Listen to Poets* 3 = *Mor.* 18C seems to show familiarity with Battarus, the brothel-keeper of Herodas, *Mimiambus* 2) and saw no gain, and certainly no propriety, in quoting them, confining himself to more anodyne citations from these poets. Equally it is not unlikely that some of the poets whom Plutarch quotes are known to him not from complete texts but from anthologies, or from their quotation in prose texts, especially perhaps philosophical texts, that he has been reading, and that they have been filtered through an intermediary stage of commonplace books or some other form of notes compiled by Plutarch himself.

Among the many absences or silences is Plutarch's apparent lack of interest in the literary productions of his contemporaries, such as we can chart in the younger Pliny or Fronto. Admittedly it is the letters of Pliny and Fronto that occasionally reveal to us their reactions to writings by their correspondents or other friends, and we have no collection of Plutarch's letters. That lack also partly accounts for the absence of occasions where the author shows excitement at discovering something in a book of whose existence or availability he had only just become aware, or where he refers to problems in tracking down a book in libraries to which he has access. Contrast the later emperor Marcus' assumption that his tutor Fronto would be keen to get his hands on a rare copy of a speech of Cato that he himself has in fact borrowed from the Palatine library (Fronto, *Epistulae ad M. Caesarem* 4.5 = 1.178 Haines = 61.6–24 Van den Hout) or Aulus Gellius hunting for

a copy of L. Aelius Stilo's "Study of axioms" (*commentarius de proloquiis*) and finding it "in the library of Peace" (*in Pacis bibliotheca*, Gell. NA 16.8.2). But our lack of Plutarchan epistolography is only part of the explanation – Athenaeus' *Banquet of Sophists* shows that the genre of *Sympotic Questions* would have allowed such scenes, however fictional.

Three particular cases of neglected contemporaries may be worth contemplating. First, both the *Palatine Anthology* and inscriptions from Thespiae preserve a number of epigrams by the poet Honestus, almost certainly composing under Tiberius, probably a Roman citizen of Corinth who was of Italian origin (for a text of his poems, with translation and commentary, see Gow and Page (1968); for his probable Corinthian origin see Jones (2004)). We can attribute the inscribed Thespian poems to Honestus because one of a sequence composed for a series of statue bases of the Muses (and of at least one imperial figure, Livia Augusta) is signed. There is nothing in Plutarch's writings to indicate that he was aware of, or at any rate interested in, this poet who was active at the shrine of the Muses on Helicon, close to Chaeronea and Delphi and to the setting of *On Desire*.

Second, Sarapion, presented in *Sympotic Questions* as a friend (cf. Jones (1978)) whose philosophical poetry, presumably composed in the manner of Empedocles, Plutarch commends. Later epigraphic evidence shows that some of Sarapion's work was remembered for some decades (see Geagan (1991), Follet and Peppas Delmousou (2001), Bowie (2006) 83–85). Plutarch praises his friend's poetry, putting the following generous assessment in the mouth of one of Sarapion's fellow-participants in a dialogue set at Delphi:

For you write poems that in their content are philosophical and rigorous, and in their power, charm, and verbal artistry are like those of Homer and Hesiod rather than those uttered by the Pythia. (*On the Oracles at Delphi* 396E)

One might suppose that poetry as good as this, composed by a friend, merited quotation, but Plutarch never does quote Sarapion, at least in his extant works.

Third, a point which takes us briefly into the broader literary world outside poetry. During Plutarch's early years – in the 50s or perhaps 60s CE – Chariton of Aphrodisias, the chief city of Caria in the Roman province Asia, was creating a new genre, the romantic novel (see Tilg (2010)). By the end of the century, and perhaps indeed earlier, a variant had been elaborated by Antonius Diogenes, apparently from the same city, a long and complicated travel novel in twenty-four books, *Incredible Things beyond Thule*, and it was circulating alongside Chariton's eight-book *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and another novel, also probably written in Aphrodisias, about Ninus and Semiramis: this last is attested on an Egyptian papyrus written earlier than 102 CE (for the chronology see Bowie (2002)). If any examples of such writing had reached the libraries of Athens or Chaeronea (which indeed they may not have done), Plutarch gives no hint he knows anything of this genre, which from its beginning matched itself in various ways against poetry, though he himself used what were to become some of the *loci communes* of the novels in his *On Desire* and in his account of Antiochus' passion for his stepmother Stratonice (*Life of Demetrius* 38).

In Plutarch, then, we have a serious philosopher for whom interests in other fields – such as the careers of Greek and Roman political figures – were ultimately an aspect of his philosophical program (cf. Duff (1999)), whose total range of reading we are never

going to know, but who regularly adduces a relatively restricted range of canonical poets in his philosophical writings. What did he see as the gains to him, to his friends, and to his philosophy pupils from having their attention drawn to these passages of poetry in his writing, and through them being encouraged, perhaps, to turn to full texts of some of their works? Any answer to these questions must be based on Plutarch's essay *How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry*, and it is therefore now appropriate that I should offer a summary of this fundamental work.⁹

3. How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry¹⁰

1 Young people take pleasure not in straight philosophy but in philosophy blended into a pleasing medium like stories or Aesopic fables; but since the pleasure they get can undermine their perspective, their exposure to such fiction must be carefully monitored, and steps taken to ensure they respond to its beneficial and not its detrimental aspects. Rather (15D–E) than following the Epicureans and eschewing poetry altogether, we ought to check it when it gets out of hand but mingle it with philosophy when it is beneficial and charming. Poetry gives a good start to young people meaning to go on to philosophy so long as they can focus on its beneficial message. 2 The element of pleasing myth and fiction/falsehood/*pseudos* in poetry has a more powerful effect than technical virtuosity – hence Socrates, a fighter for truth who was not good at falsehood, drew on Aesop's fables for his poetry. Poets' fictions about the gods – e.g. Homer's *psychostasia*, and even more that of Aeschylus – should be seen for what they are and resisted – the work of poets indulging their fancies, as Empedocles and Xenophanes saw. (17) 3 Poetry is like painting, we should admire technique not subject-matter, as in pictures of Medea, Orestes, and immoral liaisons; so too we should admire appropriateness of utterance to evil character in Thersites, Sisyphus, Battarus, and reject evil utterances in the mouths of malefactors like Eteocles, Ixion, and a money-lender. That something is done or spoken by a bad character reinforces its wickedness – in Homer (*Iliad* 3.369ff.) only Paris has sex during the day. 4 Poets often precede or follow evil words or actions with indications that these merit disapproval, e.g. Menander in the prologue to his comedy *Thais* or Homer in presenting Agamemnon's treatment of Chryses, etc. Some try to allegorize gods' misbehavior, but anybody can see that the narrative of seduction of Zeus by Hera condemns immoral music, filthy songs, and indecent proposals – as Odysseus' request to Demodocus to move over to a serious subject, the *Trojan Horse*, confirms: the episode shows the evil consequences of women's use of drugs and guile to seduce men.

Poets often give both sides of an argument – the better is to be accepted, or counter-evidence sought elsewhere in the poet's work if it is not actually presented alongside the evil deeds or words. Solutions (*lyseis*) to “paradoxical statements” (*atopōs eirēmēna*) can be drawn from works of the same poet or from other authority figures, such as Socrates and Diogenes.

6 Young readers also need good philological skills to distinguish when a god's name refers to a god or to his powers (Ares, Hephaestus): Zeus can mean “Fate,” and *Iliad* 1.1–6 simply points out that inevitably discord leads to destruction. So too one must beware of catachrestic use of terms like *aretē* (“virtue”), *kakotēs* (“vice”), and *eudaimonia* (“prosperity”).

7 Poets realistically mix good and ill, and 8 the young ought not to suppose the heroic world to be one of perfect action and situation. The reader must learn to commend some actions and words and condemn others – examples can be found in the quarrel of Achilles and Agamemnon, then in Phoenix checking his anger at *Iliad* 9.458–460, which is just what he is urging Achilles to do, using the example of Meleager (27A). Some cases are less clear: Nausicaa’s boldness and *akolasia* (“lack of sexual restraint”) are to be condemned if her wanting Odysseus as her husband is based on sexual attraction but praised if it is because she esteems his good moral qualities. Similarly Odysseus’ pleasure in watching Penelope getting gifts from her suitors and in counting his gifts from the Phaeacians on waking up on Ithaca. The young should also condemn the self-exculpation charges of Phaedra against Theseus and Helen against Hecuba. 9 The reason ought to be asked for any questionable statement. (28E) 10 Young readers must observe differences between good and bad characters (Agamemnon, Achilles, Thersites, Calchas) and (29D) races – Dolon and barbarian Trojans are inferior to Diomedes and other Greeks. “Forethought is Greek and smart, boldness is barbarian and unimpressive,” (29E23–24); Ajax’s praise of Achilles at *Iliad* 7.226 commendable. Greeks are not captured nor do they supplicate on the battlefield, Trojans do. 11 The serious reader should react positively to words displaying courage, self-control, and justice; controlling anger is good (31a), not getting angry at all is better – thus admire how Achilles takes precautions against Priam angering him at *Iliad* 24.560ff. Attend to names, but leave playing games with divine titles as did Cleanthes and Chrysippus to literary scholars (*grammatikoi*), and concentrate on being good. Consider some examples of good utterances by *phronimoi*, “men of sense”: since all depends on *phronēsis*, “good sense,” all forms of *aretē*, “virtue,” follow from *logos*, “reason,” and *didaskalia*, “schooling.” 12 As bees get honey from pungent plants and thorns, so the correctly trained young can find what is useful and beneficial: e.g. Agamemnon was bad to be bribed by a good horse to excuse the rich Echeolus from the expedition to Troy (*Iliad* 23.297), but right to take a good horse rather than a bad man; Thetis wrong to console Achilles with thoughts of sex but Achilles right to abstain from Briseis and direct energy to fighting; Archilochus wrong to indulge grief for his brother-in-law’s drowning but right to observe grief will not help so he might as well enjoy himself. Another strategy is correction of a *gnōmē* (*paradiorthōsis*), as by Cleanthes and Zenon of Euripides and Sophocles; Plutarch offers some of his own, noting that *logos*, “reason,” is the best instrument for achieving *aretē*, “virtue.” 13 Cleanthes was right to recommend extending the application of *gnōmai* from the virtue or vice specified to all similar virtues or vices: the young must develop their *oxyēkoia* ὀξύκοια, “acuteness of hearing,” so as to do this. Moral qualities not material attributes or possessions should be esteemed, as is shown by Homer’s epithets in the forms of address used by one hero to another. Reading poetry trains one not to abuse others for their misfortunes and to bear one’s own better. 14 *Gnōmai* in poetry can be reinforced by matching views of philosophers, Pythagoras and Plato, or statesmen, Chilon and Bias: seeing their applicability to real life will help the young resist the rubbish they hear from nurses and mothers, or even *paidagōgoi* and fathers, and prepare them for the truths of philosophy.

For all these reasons the young man needs guidance in reading so that he may be escorted by poetry toward philosophy as one well-disposed, friendly, and akin.

4. Plutarch's Principles Applied

How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry is overtly an essay on how young men the age of Plutarch's and Sedatius' sons should be trained to approach the poets, but some remarks suggest that it offers prescriptions for adults too. This can to some extent be confirmed by looking at almost any part of the *Moralia* (though there are indeed some essays which do not resort to literary quotation at all, cf. Bowie (2008a) 150). Here I present as an example a passage from Plutarch's *On Exile*, probably written after 96 CE (Jones (1966b) 72), which is especially rich in its use of a range of poetic sources, reinforced by remarks attributed to philosophers, and exemplifying his recommended procedure of *paradiorthōsis*¹¹:

διὸ καὶ Διογένης ὁ κύων πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα 'Σινωπεῖς σου φυγὴν ἐκ Πόντου κατέγνωσαν' 'ἐγὼ δ' εἶπεν 'ἐκείνων ἐν Πόντῳ μονήν ἄκραις ἐπὶ ῥηγμῖσιν ἀξένου πόρου (Eur. *IT* 253)'. Στρατόνικος δὲ τὸν ἐν Σερίφῳ ξένον ἠρώτησεν, ἐφ' ὅτῳ τῶν ἀδικημάτων φυγὴ τέτακται παρ' αὐτοῖς ἐπιτίμιον· ἀκούσας δ' ὅτι τοὺς ῥαδιουργοὺς φυγαδεύουσι, 'τί οὖν' εἶπεν 'οὐκ ἐρραδιούρησας, ὅπως ἐκ τῆς στενοχωρίας (602B) ταύτης μεταστής; ὅπου φησὶν ὁ κωμικὸς (*Poetae Comici Graeci* vol. 8, adespota, fr. 729 Kassel-Austin) τὰ σῦκα ταῖς σφενδόναϊς τρυγᾶσθαι καὶ πάντ' ἔχειν ὅσων <οὐ> δεῖ τὴν νῆσον. ἂν γὰρ σκοπῆς ἄνευ κενῆς δόξης τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὁ μίαν πόλιν ἔχων ξένος ἐστὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀπασῶν καὶ ἀλλότριος. οὐ γὰρ δοκεῖ καλὸν οὐδὲ δίκαιον εἶναι καταλιπόντα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ νέμειν ἑτέραν. 'Σπάρταν ἔλαχες, ταύτην κόσμει (Eur. fr. 723, 1)', κἂν ἄδοξος ἢ κἂν νοσώδης κἂν ταραττήται στάσεσιν ὑφ' ἑαυτῆς καὶ πράγμασι μὴ ὑγιαίνουσιν. οὐ δ' ἡ τύχη τὴν ἰδίαν ἀφίρηται, τοῦτ' αὖ δίδωσιν ἔχειν τὴν ἀρέσασαν. τὸ γὰρ καλὸν ἐκείνο παράγγελμα τῶν Πυθαγορείων 'ἐλοῦ' (602C) βίον τὸν ἀρίστον, ἥδυν δ' αὐτὸν ἢ συνήθεια ποιήσει, κἂν ταῦθα σοφὸν ἐστί καὶ χρήσιμον· 'ἐλοῦ πόλιν τὴν ἀρίστην καὶ ἡδίστην, πατρίδα δ' αὐτὴν ὁ χρόνος ποιήσει, καὶ πατρίδα μὴ περισπῶσαν μὴ ἐνοχλοῦσαν μὴ προστάττουσαν 'εἰσένεγκε, πρέσβευσον εἰς Ῥώμην, ὑπόδεξαι τὸν ἡγεμόνα, λειτούργησον'. ἂν γὰρ τούτων τις μνημονεύῃ φρένας ἔχων καὶ μὴ παντάπασι τετυφωμένος, αἰρήσεται καὶ νῆσον οἰκεῖν φυγὰς γενόμενος Γύαρὸν ἢ Κίναρον

'σκληρὰν ἄκαρπον καὶ φυτεύεσθαι κακὴν'¹²

οὐκ ἄθυμῶν οὐδ' ὀδυρόμενος οὐδὲ λέγων ἐκεῖνα τὰ τῶν (602D) παρὰ Σιμωνίδῃ (fr. 571 *PMG*) γυναικῶν,

'ἴσχει δέ με πορφυρέας ἀλὸς ἀμφιταρασσομένας ὀρυμαγδός',
ἀλλὰ μάλλον τὸ τοῦ Φιλίππου λογιζόμενος· πεσὼν γὰρ ἐν παλαίστρᾳ καὶ μεταστραφεὶς, ὡς εἶδε τοῦ σώματος τὸν τύπον, ὧς Ἡράκλεις, εἶπεν 'ὡς μικροῦ μέρους τῆς γῆς φύσει μετέχοντες ὅλης ἐφίεμεθα τῆς οἰκουμένης' ...

(602EF) ᾧ δ' ἔξεστιν εἰς μικρὰν ἀποβάντι νῆσον οὐ μικρῶν ἀπηλλάχθαι κακῶν, οὗτος ἄθλιός ἐστι μὴ προσλαλῶν ἑαυτῷ τὰ Πινδαρικά μὴδ' ἐπάδων πολλάκις (fr. 154 = *Paeon* IV 50 ff.)

'ἔα, φρήν, κυπάρισσον [φιλέειν], ἔα δὲ νομὸν [Κρήτας] περιδαίον.

ἐμοὶ δ' ὀλίγον μὲν γὰς δέδοται, † ὅθεν ἄδρυς,

πενθέων δ' οὐκ ἔλαχον <οὐδὲ> στασίων'

οὐδὲ προσταγμάτων ἡγεμονικῶν οὐδ' ὑπουργιῶν ἐν πολιτικαῖς χρεῖαις καὶ λειτουργιῶν δυσπαρατήτων. ὅπου γὰρ οὐ φαύλως δοκεῖ λέγειν ὁ Καλλιμάχος (*Aetia* fr. 1.18 Pfeiffer) τὸ 'μὴ σχοίνῳ Περσίδι τὴν σοφίην', ἥπου τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν σχοίνοις καὶ παρασάγγαις μετροῦντες, (603A) ἔαν νῆσον οἰκῶμεν διακοσίῳν σταδίῳν ἀλλὰ μὴ τεσσάρων ἡμερῶν ὥσπερ ἡ Σικελία περίπλουν ἔχουσαν, ὀδυνᾶν ἑαυτοὺς καὶ θρηνεῖν ὀφείλομεν ὡς κακοδαίμονοι; τί γὰρ ἡ πλατεῖα χώρα πρὸς τὸν ἄλυπον βίον; οὐκ ἀκούεις τοῦ Ταντάλου λέγοντος ἐν τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ (*Aes.* fr. 158)

‘σπείρω δ’ ἄρουραν δώδεχ’ ἡμερῶν ὁδόν,
Βερέκυντα χῶρον,’

εἶτα μετ’ ὀλίγον λέγοντος (Aes. fr. 159)

‘οὐμὸς δὲ πότμος οὐρανῷ κυρῶν ἄνω
ἔραζε πίπτει καί με προσφωνεῖ τάδε·
γίνωσκε τάνθρώπεια μὴ σέβειν ἄγαν’;

ὁ δὲ Ναυσίθοος τὴν εὐρύχωρον Ὑπέρειαν καταλιπὼν διὰ (603B) τὸ γεινιᾶν τοὺς Κύκλωπας αὐτῇ καὶ μεταστὰς εἰς νῆσον ‘ἐκάς ἀνδρῶν ἀλφιστάων’ (*Od.* 6.8) καὶ κατοικῶν ἀνεπίμικτος ἀνθρώπων ‘ἀπάνευθε πολυκλύστῳ ἐνὶ πόντῳ’ (*Od.* 6.204) τὸν ἥδιστον παρεσκεύασε βίον τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ πολίταις. Plutarch, *On Exile* 7–9 = *Mor.* 602A–603B

This is why, when somebody said to Diogenes the Cynic “The citizens of Sinope have condemned you to be exiled from Pontus,” he replied, “And I have condemned them to stay in Pontus ‘by the furthest breakers of an inhospitable channel’ [Euripides, *Iphigeneia among the Taurians* 258].” Stratoniceus asked his guest-friend in Seriphos for what crime exile was established there as a penalty, and when he was told that they sent slackers into exile replied, “Then why have you not become a slacker, so that you can emigrate from this confined space?” – where the comic poet [*Poetae Comici Graeci* vol. 8, adespota, fr. 729 Kassel-Austin] says figs are harvested with slings and the island has everything one does not need. (8) For if you examine the truth without empty ambitions, the man who has one city is a stranger and alien in all others. For it does not seem noble or just to leave one’s own city and inhabit another: “Sparta has fallen to your lot, bring adornment to it” [Euripides fr. 728.1], whether it is obscure or pestilential or is suffering internal convulsions as a result of civil conflicts and a decline in public life. But to the man from whom she has taken away his own city Fortune gives the one which pleases him. For that noble exhortation of the Pythagoreans “Choose the best life, and familiarity will make it pleasant” is also wise and useful in this context: “Choose the best and most pleasant city, and time will make it your native land,” and a native land that does not manipulate or interfere or tell one “Make a contribution!” “Go on an embassy to Rome!” “Offer lodging to the governor!” “Perform a liturgy!” For if somebody recalls these things who is sane and not utterly ambitious he will choose to become an exile and live even in an island like Gyaros or Cinaros, “rugged, unproductive, difficult to plant” [see note 12], not despondent or lamenting or repeating those words of women in Simonides “And I am gripped by the thunder of the dark-blue sea bursting in confusion around me” [fr. 571 *PMG*] but rather reflecting on the remark of Philip: for when he fell in the wrestling ground and turned round, and saw the imprint of his body, he exclaimed, “Heracles, how small a part of the earth has nature given us, who have the whole world as our objective.” [...] But somebody who is allowed to disembark at a small island and be rid of ills that are not small is pitiable if he does not first say to himself and frequently repeat the words of Pindar:

Abandon, heart, the cypress, abandon the land around Ida,
But to me a small piece of land has been granted [...]
and I have no share of woes, nor of civil conflicts [...] [Pindar, *Paeon* 4.50–52]

nor of orders from the governor nor of obligations in political duties nor of liturgies hard to refuse. (10) For on a point where Callimachus seems not to put it badly, his phrase [*Actia* fr. 1.18 Pfeiffer] “not by the Persian measuring rope,” ought we indeed to measure good fortune by ropes and parasangs, if we live on an island whose circuit by sea is 200 stades

[c. twenty-five miles] and not, like that of Sicily, four days, and give ourselves pain, and lament, as if suffering bad fortune? What bearing has an extensive estate on a life without distress? Can you not hear Tantalus saying in the tragedy

I sow an estate that extends for ten days' journey
The Berecynthian land

[Aeschylus fr. 158]

And then saying a little later

But my destiny, holding fast up in the heavens
Falls to the ground and addresses me in these words:
“Learn not to revere mortal things to excess.”

[Aeschylus fr. 159]

And Nausithous, by abandoning the huge territory of Hypereia because the Cyclopes were its neighbors and migrating to an island “far from grain-eating men” [*Odyssey* 6.8] and settling where he had no communications, “far” from men “in the wave-bound sea” brought about the most pleasant life for his fellow-citizens [*Odyssey* 6.204].

The passage well exemplifies how Plutarch’s sequence of thought – not always a tight argument – moves forward by bouncing from one citation to another, extracting some cultural capital by briefly tapping one authority figure before moving on to the next.¹³

One clear function of Plutarch’s approach to reading the canonical poets is to reinforce the values of his elite society. At the core are the philosopher’s touchstones of courage, self-control, and justice – compare, but also contrast, the library of Celsus at Ephesus with its four statues of wisdom (*Sophia*), knowledge (*Epistēmē*), intelligence (*Ennoia*), and virtue (*Aretē*) – but the context in which these qualities are assumed to be required is the political life of the civic elites (note Plutarch’s reference to liturgies). A revealing glimpse of Plutarch’s own lifestyle is revealed by the remark in *How a Young Man Should Listen to Poetry* with which he follows his verdict that Archilochus is wrong to indulge grief for his brother-in-law’s drowning but right to observe grief would not help, so he might as well enjoy himself (12 = 33AB): “How will our own situation be made worse if we engage in philosophy and politics and go out to the *agora* and walk down to the Academy and attend to farming?” Similarly his prejudices emerge a little later (13 = 34D) in his extension of his own *paradiorthōsis* of Odysseus’ reaction when he finds Achilles carding wool on Scyros: “Are you drinking, born of a father who is best of the Hellenes?” or “Are you gambling?” or “Are you betting on quail-fights?” or “Are you setting up as a retailer?” or “Are you a money-lender?”

5. Conclusions

Plutarch’s attitudes to poetry were very much the product of his philosophical orientation and his membership of the educated Greek elite, the *pepaideumenoí*. Whether

Plutarch or many other similar members of this elite really *liked* classical poetry is not easy to tell, though a remark by his character Philippus criticizing the performance of pieces of Sappho and Anacreon simply to entertain dinner guests (*Sympotic Questions* 7.8.2 = *Mor.* 711D) suggests that their love poetry, though not much quoted by Plutarch himself, as noted above, was regarded as rather more than easy listening. Plutarch never dwells on the literary quality or emotional impact of a piece of poetry in the way we find the late first-century BCE critic and historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus, or his near contemporary who wrote *On the Sublime*, enthusing: he might indeed have been disapproving or suspicious of the lack of self-control such emotion might seem to entail. Nor, like these critics or like Athenaeus almost a century later, does Plutarch quote long pieces of poetry, or indeed seem to see the point of citing a short poem complete as, it seems, did his close contemporary Dio when quoting an apparently complete eight-liner of Anacreon (fr. 357 *PMG* at *Oration* 2.62: for some differences between Plutarch's and Dio's perspectives see Bowie (2004)). It seems unlikely that Plutarch's four-book commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days* had much if anything to say about the work's literary excellence (by contrast with the very many sensitive observations of Hellenistic and Greco-Roman critics on Homer's poetic technique preserved in our scholia to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*): "We get the impression of a strongly moralistic work, in which the scholarship and science are harnessed to a clearly defined educational purpose" (Russell (1972) 49–50). One might wonder whether, had Plutarch himself been exiled to a desert island, where the shackles of *polis* society would not have been upon him, his box of book-rolls would have contained any poetry other than that by the philosopher Empedocles.

NOTES

- 1 See Morgan (1998), Cribiore (2001).
- 2 For a closer exploration of these different types of quotation see Bowie (2008a).
- 3 For Plutarch's uses of Thucydides see Stadter (1973), Tosi (2004); for other uses of historiography Desideri (1991).
- 4 Helmbold and O'Neill (1959).
- 5 See Citti (2004), Di Gregorio (1976).
- 6 For discussion of some Sophocles quotations see Bowie (2008a) 152.
- 7 For *Simonidea* see Sider (2007).
- 8 Cf. Zadorojnyi (1999).
- 9 For a very good discussion see Russell (1972) 51–53 and the introduction to the recent excellent commentary by Donald Russell and Richard Hunter (Hunter and Russell (2011)).
- 10 In this summary arabic numerals refer to the continuous Stephanus numeration of pages of the *Moralia*, **bold** arabic numerals to chapter numbers within the work.
- 11 For a very good analysis of Plutarch's deployment of poetic quotation and allusion in *On Desire* (Ἐρωτικός) 762D see Russell (1972) 48–49.
- 12 This is usually thought to be a line from an Attic tragedy or comedy (*trag. adesp.* 393, *com. adesp.* 1238): perhaps rather from Archilochus' Gyges poem with its attested depreciation of Thasos, fr. 19–22 West *IE*, of which fr. 21 West *IE* is cited by Plutarch *On Exile* 21 = *Mor.* 604C.
- 13 For discussion of clusters of quotations see Bowie (2008a) 153.

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CHAPTER 13

Love and Marriage

Georgia Tsouvala

1. Introduction and Considerations

Love and marriage are central topics in Plutarch's thinking in both the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, important elements in the life of the philosopher and good statesman. Combining elements from other prescriptive philosophies, Plutarch concentrates on the equal status of the conjugal partners, on the positive evaluation of *eros* (both physical and spiritual-philosophical), and on the reciprocity and the sharing in the marital relationship. Furthermore, and without dismissing traditional pederastic relationships, Plutarch argues for the primacy of mutual erotic affection in marriage, which he identifies as the only lawful and appropriate type of *eros* for adult citizens.

Sexual desire and pleasure are not sufficient for a successful marriage; a complete union of resources and minds is also required. Both in the *Advice to the Bride and Groom* and in the *Eroticus*, the guiding metaphors for a successful marriage are: (a) mixing (*mixis*), (b) blending or combining (*krasis*), and (c) harmony (*harmonia*). A harmonious marriage is one that brings Aphrodite and Hermes together (or sexual pleasure and reason) through the assistance of the Muses, Persuasion, and the Graces. It is through philosophy, discourse, and harmony that the "tunefulness of marriage and home" is achieved (*Mor.* 138C). In this way, *eros* becomes a stable sentiment and serves as the foundation for a citizen marriage. Finally, love and marriage have a political aspect that transcends ancestral feuds, philosophical factions, local competitions, and any type of discord in the *polis* and in the empire. In this universally unifying ability of love and marriage, *eros* in the marital relationship becomes highly politicized in Plutarch's prescriptive philosophy.

Before examining these themes in more detail, however, one may consider some of the limitations associated with the study of love and marriage in Plutarch's works. First,

the geographical dichotomy that exists in the field between Greek literature and Roman literature, or Greek philosophy and Roman philosophy, or even on Greek and Roman history collapses with Plutarch, because he reflects and bridges attitudes in both societies into a hybrid, elite, Greco-Roman point of view. It is difficult, at times, to distinguish what is a Greek or Roman practice and attitude in his work. He was a provincial but also a citizen and statesman of the Roman Empire, and although he wrote in Greek, his philosophy and his ideology concern and encompass the Roman Empire, both its political center and its multifaceted provincial periphery. Furthermore, one must not forget that Plutarch expresses the prescriptive views of a male, provincial aristocrat of the Roman Empire and that his writings do not necessarily articulate the opinions of women or of the common person on most of his subjects, including love and marriage.

Second, although the main focus of the section in which this chapter appears is primarily on philosophy and religion, one must not forget that for the Greeks and the Romans, the philosophical and religious spheres were not distinct from the political and social life. The bifurcation of love and marriage in the private, intellectual, or philosophical realm is a modern construct, while for Plutarch the philosophical and the private were political. One of his main concerns was the education and creation of the good citizen and statesman and, therefore, his philosophy on love and marriage reflects those interests. Moreover, a study of love and marriage is connected intrinsically with issues of gender and sexuality, since *eros* in the ancient writers concerns itself with and depends on the subject of male and female inferiority or superiority and its ramifications. Plutarch stands out among Greek authors for his belief that women and men can and should be partners (albeit not necessarily equal by modern standards) in a marital relationship. His thinking had precedents in Plato and Xenophon, of course, and like Xenophon (*Oec.* 10.1; Pomeroy (1994) 35), Plutarch, too, believed that a woman with a “masculine” mind and soul could be an ideal partner. Therefore, although the topic of love and marriage appears to be philosophical, at first sight, this chapter covers a wide range of material that could be useful to students and scholars of philosophy, religion, women’s studies, gender, sexuality, and history.

Third, the bibliography of the two topics, love and marriage, when studied separately is voluminous and any attempt to contextualize Plutarch’s philosophy on the subject in a short essay such as this cannot be anything but impressionistic. A cursory search in *L’Année philologique* and a look at the papers published by Plutarch scholars in the collection *El Amor en Plutarco* (Nieto Ibáñez and López López 2007) verifies both the immensity of the material and the challenge of the languages with which a student of Plutarch has to contend. For the purposes of this chapter, I have included mostly secondary work in English.

Finally, one cannot come to any meaningful conclusions about Plutarch’s philosophy and ideology on love and marriage without looking at all his works. While the topics of love and marriage are elaborated by Plutarch in two essays, the *Eroticus* and the *Advice to the Bride and Groom* in the *Moralia*, the biographies, too, complement and provide paradigms for the philosophical treatises. Again, such a project is one worthy of serious undertaking but remains beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, what I aim to do here is to provide a summary of the primary and secondary material on the topics of love and marriage principally in the *Eroticus* and the *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, while at the same time contextualizing his assertions within his work and milieu.

2. A Philosophy of *Eros*: Physical, Spiritual, Conjugal, and Political *Eros*

Physical vs. Spiritual Eros: The Homoerotic Argument

In spite of the many lacunae that exist in the text, two main types of physical *eros* can be distinguished in the *Eroticus*: homoerotic (or same-sex) and heterosexual (or love for women only). Both types are further classified by Plutarch as being acceptable and non-acceptable, lawful and unlawful, or moral and immoral. Sex with one's wife, for example, would be acceptable and lawful, but extra-marital relationships are rejected. Same-sex relationships between an older and a younger man (called pederastic) would be acceptable but same-sex relationships between freeborn men of equal status are also rejected. Below I set out the main, traditional arguments regarding homoerotic and heterosexual *eros* of the two camps as they appear in the dialogue, and then provide Plutarch's response and philosophy.

According to the arguments of Protagenes and Peisias in the *Eroticus*, same-sex *eros* is spiritual, intellectual, and liberating. In Platonic fashion, it creates friendship and virtue, while love for women and by extension love in marriage is not only foul but unthinkable. Marriage is an institution, necessary for procreation, and as such lawgivers are interested in it, but it is not the place one is to seek love. Real love does not belong in the women's quarters (750C). For Protagenes, women are tools: one gets children and pleasure from them (750C–D), and they are also good for economic profit, sex (*aphrodisia*), and copulation (*synousia*, 750E–F).¹ The desire (*epithumia*) for women brings only pleasure (*hedone*) and temporary enjoyment (*apolausis*) for the body, but not for the soul (750D). Sexual desire for women is reduced to lust and is compared to sex with male slaves. Such sex is considered vulgar for it is mere copulation and unworthy of a free citizen (751A–B). By nature, says Protagenes, there is this need in both women and men for pleasuring each other, but when that need becomes vigorous and powerful, it is not right to call it *eros*. The object of desire is pleasure and enjoyment but *eros* hopes to inspire friendship (*philia*) – it has no wish to continue cultivating a deficient plant which has come to its prime, if the plant cannot yield the proper fruit of character to produce friendship and virtue (*arête*, 750E). For Protagenes, women are like these deficient plants, and loving them shows arrogance and intemperance in the individual (750B). Genuine love (*gnesios eros*) is the pederastic *eros* (*paidikos*), he says, which is not flashing with desire or perfumes but searches for the young men in pursuit of virtue (751A). Pederastic *eros* attaches itself to a young and intelligent soul and through *philia* brings the soul to *arête* at last. Pederastic love brings about virtue through friendship – not through pleasure and enjoyment (750D). Pederastic love is a good and refined thing and worthy of a free person, Protagenes says (751B).

Physical vs. Homoerotic Eros: The Heterosexual Argument

The supporters of heterosexual *eros* and of marriage are represented by Daphneus and Anthemion in the *Eroticus*. In fact, Daphneus considers the union (*synodos*) between man and woman as the holiest of unions (750C). He responds to Protagenes' argument by

saying that passion (*pathos*) for either boys or women is the same thing: *eros* (i.e. physical desire, 751F). Daphneus puts forth traditional arguments that reject all same-sex relationships as contrary to nature (751C; and cf. Williams (2010) Appendix 1) because they do not function according to the laws of nature by rejecting Aphrodite (i.e. sex). Although the pederasts say that they reject the physical aspect of *eros* and emphasize instead its intellectual and spiritual benefits, Daphneus implies that they are either lying about not having sex or they are raping the beloved. There cannot be Eros without Aphrodite (or love without sex), he says. Such an asexual partnership (*koinonia*) is like drunkenness without wine; its agitation is without fruit, incomplete, enjoyable, and quickly sated (752A–B). Therefore, he says, they are either having sex with unwilling males, an act that is not *eros* but rape, or they are having sex with willing males. Later in the dialogue, Plutarch will mention that young men, like Crateas and Pytholaos, who were not born immoral (*kakoi*) but who were deceived or were forced to yield and let themselves be abused, hated the men who abused them and even sought vengeance (768E–F).

Both the act that renders the man who is forcibly feminized by being physically violated and the man who willingly acquires the passive role in a sexual relationship are singled out by Daphneus here, but the latter is further demonized. Such sexual encounter is described as unnatural, an ungraceful favor in every way, ugly, and without Aphrodite (*anaphroditos*) that reveals an effeminate and weak individual (751D–E; Hubbard (2009) 249–258). The latter type of *eros* is not pederastic but something else. The Greek in the *Eroticus* supports a distinction between “pederastic” (751A) and “so-called pederastic” relationships (*ho paidikos houtos*, 751F). Daphneus goes on to say that this type of *eros* denies pleasure because it is ashamed and afraid, so it pretends and hides behind the labels of “philosophy,” “friendship,” and “virtue” because of the law (752A–B). In other words, the so-called pederastic relationships are those in which consenting sex between freeborn men (not boys) is involved and, therefore, they have to be hidden because of the law. These types of illegal same-sex relationships are, then, declared a recent and unrestrained phenomenon occurring in the traditional male haunts of ancient Greece, in the *gymnasia* and the *palestrai* (cf. 274D; Williams (2010) 63–82). Daphneus calls this counterfeit type of pederastic *eros* the “illegitimate son (*nothos*) of an old man, a child of darkness, opposed to the legitimate and older conjugal *eros*” (751F).

Daphneus, also, elaborates on the benefits of conjugal love. He says that while same-sex *eros* is like a dizzying storm, marriage and love bring tranquility in one’s life (751E). Heterosexual *eros* is natural for it is conducive to *philia*, developing in time from the granting of favor or kindness (*charis*), which has been defined as the woman’s acquiescence to a man by the ancients (751D). He points out the importance of procreation, too; conjugal love (*gamelios eros*) is a partner to the immortality of the race through procreation (752A). For Daphneus, then, conjugal love is beneficial because it provides tranquility and progeny.

Eros: Plutarch’s Argument

Plutarch, without rejecting pederasty, identifies himself as a devotee of conjugal *eros* (753B–C). In fact, Plutarch advocates for both pederastic and conjugal *erotes* (758B–C, 759A, 765C–D, 766E–767A, 768B, 769B–C), but makes it clear that sex is to be

excluded from pederasty (768E–769A). He summarizes the anti-conjugal argument thus: marriage is a loveless partnership (*anerastos koinonia*) devoid of god-inspired friendship that cannot be held together by shame and fear, if it is missing erotic persuasion and kindness (752C–D).

Plutarch's response concerns three main issues: (1) the religiosity and spirituality of Eros, (2) women's capability to achieve *philia*, *eros*, and wisdom, and (3) appropriate relationships for free citizens. Plutarch will defend Eros' divinity as well as his spiritual and eschatological nature. He will also endorse women and their ability to love as well as their worthiness of being loved, qualities which are prerequisites for the argument that allows for a philosophy of *eros* in marriage. Finally, he will argue for marriage as the ideal relationship for a free citizen and will insinuate, thus, his support of conjugal *eros* as the only lawful and politically viable *eros* of the freeborn men and women of the Roman Empire.

3. The Religious, Spiritual, and Eschatological Nature of *Eros*

Plutarch provides a traditional defense of Eros' divinity against Pemptides' accusations that Eros is a disease and a passion but not a god. Plutarch states that it is sophistry and a dangerous thing to shake the unshakable belief in the gods. Traditional faith (*pistis/fides*) is sufficient – it is the basis and the foundation of reverence to the gods (*eusebeia/pietas*, 756B). There is nothing to be gained by debating the existence of the gods. Furthermore, Eros is not a new, barbarian intruder, an illegitimate god, or one worshipped by women and effeminate men (756C). Although Eros is not visible, he is a famous god among the most ancient of gods (756D). Then Plutarch provides a genealogy of Eros. According to Parmenides, he says, it was Aphrodite who created Eros, but Hesiod (with whom Plutarch agrees) said that Eros was the primary force for the birth of all things, including Aphrodite (756E). Later, Plutarch will label Eros as the companion of the Muses, Graces, and of Aphrodite (758B–C; but cf. 138C). In his belief that Eros was a primordial force that gave birth to all things including Aphrodite, Plutarch breaks away from Plato who had argued that Aphrodite is more important than Eros.

Plutarch agrees with Daphneus that Eros and Aphrodite are joined at the hip. One cannot strip Eros from his traditional honors without touching Aphrodite; the two are part of each other and inseparable (757A). Although Aphrodite is called “giver of life” by Empedocles and “fruitful” by Sophocles, these primary functions of Aphrodite become a secondary task (*parergon*) of Eros, when he accompanies her (756E). If he does not accompany Aphrodite (i.e. if he is not present during intercourse), what occurs is a dreary residue, dishonored and without a friend. Intercourse without Eros (*anerastos homilia*) is like hunger and thirst which, although they can be physically satisfying, cannot achieve a noble end. An individual, according to Plutarch, can achieve pleasure through the fulfillment of physical needs but cannot achieve a nobler and more spiritual goal just by satisfying only those desires and needs; Eros, however, can accomplish such higher and spiritual goals. It is through Eros that Aphrodite removes the satiety of pleasure and creates something nobler: affection (*philoteta*) and blending between individuals (*synkrasis*, 756E). Although Eros has such a higher function and importance in one's life, he, like all the other gods, has not escaped slander.

Eros is a divinity that stirs the affectionate (*philetikon*), the sociable (*koinonikon*), and the unifying (*suneleustikon*) elements in humans. Eros is the god, he says, who witnesses, oversees, presides over, and helps those who desire a marriage and affection that leads to same-mindedness and to communion (757D). Eros is a god who leads a man (*sic*) straight and supports his efforts to a noble goal and the fairest of prey, i.e. the attainment of friendship (757E). Plutarch proceeds to lay out for his audience the function of Eros: he is the leader and master of the care and pursuit of the lovers and through persuasion and favor leads the lovers to virtue and friendship (758B–C; cf. 754D, 138C–D). The Eros that Plutarch has in mind begins from a sexual relationship but goes beyond that: Eros mixes the most pleasurable with the most beautiful through friendship (758C).

At this point, Plutarch's defense of the divinity of Eros is transformed into a philosophical diatribe. Plutarch will go on to expound on the four types of *philia* (kinship, guest-friendship, friendship with one's comrades, erotic friendship), the different types of madness (*mania*: somatic and divine), and on the five types of divine madness (*enthousiasmos*). Plutarch breaks away from Platonic doctrine as he distinguishes not four but five types of divine madness or *enthousiasmos* (prophetic, bacchic, poetic and musical, martial, and affectionate), each inspired and possessed by a particular god. The fifth type he calls friendship (*philetikon*). It is significant that he does not call it *erotikon*, but he identifies it as friendship or affection. This last type of divine madness, *to philetikon*, is the fiercest and hottest of them all, and is the madness that arouses affection for virtuous boys *and* for decent women (758E–759A). Plutarchan *philia*, therefore, can be found in both pederastic and heterosexual relationships. With this statement, Plutarch expands the concept of Platonic *philia* found only in pederastic relationships to a *philia* that extends also to relationships with respectable women, but without rejecting same-sex relationships outright.

Next Plutarch elaborates on the idea that Eros is necessary in sexual matters and he continues his discussion about Eros' ultimate power. Plutarch maintains that without *eros* the sexual act is cheap, mere pleasure, and ephemeral. The work of Aphrodite, if Eros is not present, can be bought for a drachma (759E). No one ever endured pain or danger just because of sex (*aphrodision heneka*, 759E); no one risked his life for the sake of hetaeras. The favor (*charis*) of Aphrodite is weak and quickly sated when Eros has not inspired it (759F). Many men, such as Galba and Phaullus, shared not only their hetaeras but also their wives (*gametas*) with others (760A–B). Although some become pimps to their own wives for the pleasures of sex, it is not so for true lovers who would give up even their own lives to protect their beloved, and who would protect their beloved from Zeus himself (760B). That is the case because Eros is more powerful than any god, tyrant, or king. Even Alexander the Great did not cross the line (not even with music performers) when he knew that these women were loved by their lovers. Eros is superior in Ares' sphere, too (760D). A man filled with Eros has no need of Ares to fight his enemies; because his beloved is on the field, he fights with more zeal (760F). This type of same-sex *eros* seems acceptable to Plutarch, probably because of his interest in tradition and in the creation of the ideal statesman. He writes that even cities accept this type of pederastic Eros. After the Thessalian War, Chalkis, for example, accepted this type of *eros* and honored it more than other *poleis*, although they had frowned upon it before (761A). In Thebes, the lover gives a complete suit of armor as a gift to his beloved, when the young man is registered in the rolls of "Men" (761B). Pammenes considered pederastic

Eros to be the only invincible general (761B). Although men might desert their tribe, relatives, parents, and children, male lovers do not allow any enemy to penetrate, when Eros is present (761C). Not only mortal men and warlike people (like the Boeotians, Spartans, and Cretans) are the most susceptible to Eros, but heroes as well (Heracles being the prime example, 761C–F). In some cases, even when there is no need for it, the male lovers are moved to exhibit their love for danger and their disregard for their life. Lover and beloved do not abandon each other in front of danger, but rather defend their love against all enemies, and sometimes they even exhibit their love by disregarding their own lives (761C). True *eros* conquers all.

Next, Plutarch explores Eros' kindness and favors (*eumeneia kai charin*) to humankind in general, and to lovers in particular, as his influence transforms them into better human beings (762B). At a minimum, Eros is a teacher, he says, because it makes one wise, even if previously sluggish (cf. 140A and 145C–146A where the husband is the teacher to the wife; cf. Plin. *Ep.* 4.19). Also, Eros makes one brave – as argued above – even when a coward before. Even women become brave when they are in love. “Women have no part at all in Ares; but if Eros possesses them, it leads them to acts of courage beyond the bounds of nature, even to die” (761E; cf. 769B). In the *Eroticus*, the steadfastness and cunning of *eros* in the face of trials and social disapproval are exemplified in the stories of Ismenodora, Empona, and Camma (for a discussion of the function of *exempla* in the *Eroticus* see Frazier (2005) 197–211). Furthermore, Eros makes one generous, frank, and high-minded. The lover rejoices in giving *eros* to his beloved more than receiving it. Even when his beloved misbehaves, the lover sees the good and positive elements in his beloved, as can be deduced from the story of Anytus and Alcibiades (762C). Eros changes the cantankerous and sullen and makes them more sociable and agreeable (762D). A small, humble, and ignoble soul suddenly is invaded by high thoughts, self-determination, aspiration, kindness, and generosity (762E). The lover (*erotikos*) is unafraid of anything or of anyone – not only of companions and relatives, but also of laws, magistrates, and kings. In fact, the lover is not afraid of anything, admires nothing, and cares for nothing until he or she catches a glimpse of a noble person and then any arrogance and haughtiness is shattered (762E). How the *erotikos* feels when faced with the beloved only Sappho's fiery lyrics are able to capture: her voice is lost, her body burns, she turns pale, gets dizzy, and staggers (762F–763A). The feelings the *erotikos* exhibits are a plain case of divine possession, of a supernatural agitation of the soul that compares to that of Pythia and the devotees of Dionysus and Cybele. It is because of Eros that only the lover is seized by the beauty of the beloved, although many others behold that beauty as well.

Next Plutarch expounds on the most important function of Eros, his role in the transportation of the individual to Beauty and to a divine existence. In this discussion Plutarch touches upon matters of epistemology, cult, and politics. His methodology here exemplifies his thinking as a priest, philosopher, and statesman, and puts in high relief the triple nature of the god and the topic: religious, philosophical, and political. Eros is brought down from the wilderness of the mountains and into the polis, is acculturated and civilized through Academic philosophy, and is accepted and unanimously elected ultimate leader by all city authorities. Because knowledge comes from myth, custom, and reason, the poets, legislators, and philosophers have been our epistemological authorities, and they all state that the gods exist, although they disagree about their number, rank,

nature, and function (763B). Furthermore, they all agree that Eros is a god and is chosen king, magistrate, and regulator by all of them (763D). With a crown on his head, he is brought down from Mt. Helicon to the Academy and is given a triumphal procession in which there are many two-horse chariots bound by friendship and fellowship (*philiās kai koinonias*, 763F). This civilized and political Eros does not rule tyrannically and oppressively, but in friendship and in partnership. This *eros* of friendship and fellowship is winged and brings one to the most beautiful and most divine existence. Like the *eros* of Plato, the spiritual and philosophical *eros*, which transports one to Beauty, is suitable for the educated and the freeborn according to Plutarch.

Next, and at Soclarus' instigation, Plutarch revisits Egyptian mythology and expands on theological and philosophical matters concerning the nature of the god and his benefits to humankind, such as his revelation of what is beautiful in the beloved. The Egyptians recognize two Erotes, he says, just as the Greeks do: Uranios (Heavenly) and Pandemos (Vulgar), but they also believe that there is a third Eros, Helios. Some philosophers, he says, think that Eros is similar to the sun in that it provides a sweet and fertile warmth and radiance. Furthermore, they believe that the radiance that proceeds from Eros gives nourishment, light, and the power of growth to the soul – as the sun does for the body (764B). Just as the sun is warmer after a fog, Eros is sweeter and stronger after the rage and jealousy of the beloved (764C). Others, he says, consider Eros a mortal and uncertain thing – like the sun that burns and then disappears. Moreover, they believe that an uncultivated soul cannot sustain Eros without pain and sorrow – just like the unexercised body cannot sustain the sun. Instead, the uncultivated souls degenerate and become sick, but blame the god's power rather than their own weakness. Unlike the sun, however, which sheds light on both beauty and ugliness, Eros illuminates only what is beautiful in others, and persuades the lovers to pay attention only to that beauty and to overlook everything else (764C–D). Like Eros, Aphrodite has two aspects as well: she is both earthly and heavenly. By itself earth is dark and deprived of its strength, just like Aphrodite is without Eros (764D). Plutarch sides with those who believe that Aphrodite is similar to the moon and Eros to the sun, although they are not always identical to them either. Eros, for example, can only be “seen” with one's mind (*noetos*), while the sun is perceivable through the sense of vision. In fact, the deeds of the sun are very different from those of Eros in that the sun is concerned with things perceived through the senses (*aistheta*) while Eros is concerned more with intelligible things (*noeton*).

Plutarch goes on to discuss this intellectual and spiritual function of the god: Eros is the recollection (*anamnesis*) of the places and things we knew before we were born (764E). In Platonic fashion, Plutarch maintains that the soul's true state of wakefulness was in that other life and realm, but it is deceived through pleasure and wonder that everything here is good and honorable (764E–F). It is only through visions that the soul gets to experience that most beautiful and divine realm again (764F). Plutarch remarks on this idea of Eros as recollection in the *Platonic Questions* as well. There he writes that Socrates called *erotiken* the wisdom of the divine and intelligible; that erotic wisdom is a recollection (1000D). Eros then becomes one's guide to this other divine realm of Beauty and Truth. Divine and respectable Eros (*theiou kai sophronos Erotos*) is the healer, the savior, and the ruler of the soul; Eros by means of bodies becomes the guide from Hades to the Plain of Truth (*to aletheias pedion*), where the pure and genuine Beauty is

established (764F–765A). Eros, like the mystic guide at the initiation, kindly lifts up and brings back those who want to keep kissing and having intercourse (765A).

For the god and for Plutarch, physical *eros* is a prerequisite to the spiritual and intelligible. Eros approaches the soul and Beauty through the body and sex. Physical Eros, however, needs to be civilized and tamed by a philosophical marriage. Heavenly Eros is intelligible, incorporeal, divine, incorruptible, and unchanging (765B). He contrives for humans beautiful reflections of beautiful realities, but these are mere mortal reflections of the divine. Elsewhere, Plutarch maintains that vision provides the first impulse to Eros; erotic glances make the lovers melt and destroy them as they live with pleasure commingled with pain, a pleasure they call “bitter-sweet” (681A). Our memory of the Beautiful is moved first by images of the young in their prime (765B). Those, whose friends and relatives have tried violently and unreasonably to extinguish this early experience (*pathos*), did not allow these young people to derive any benefit from it; instead, they grow up and fill themselves with smoke and disorder or they flow toward dark and illicit pleasures and ingloriously wither away (765B; cf. Cic. *Mil.* 76). But those young men and women, who excluded the manic element through reason and modesty, left radiance, light, and warmth in their souls (765B–C). Such reason is symbolically represented in Hermes, who stands by Aphrodite, since marital pleasure is especially in need of reason (138C). This warmth produces a marvelous and fertile diffusion, which opens the way to compliance and friendliness. Soon, the lover disregards the body of the beloved and attaches himself to his or her character (765C). That initial physical reaction is difficult to maintain unless it settles in the character, lays hold of the mind, and acquires a life of its own (138F). The lovers, then, see clearly and have intercourse through reasoned discourse and actions to see whether they have in their thinking an image and pattern of the Beautiful (765C). If they do not, they abandon each other; but whenever they find even a trace, an emanation, or resemblance of the divine, they are intoxicated with joy and are amazed at the experience. They benefit from the memory and shine toward wonderful Beauty – that truly beloved and blessed Beauty, beloved by all, and worthy of affection (765F; cf. 681A–B).

The attainment of Beauty, then, is the ultimate function and goal of Eros. The pursuit of boys and women is only the mirrored image of Beauty; they are illusory objects of desire and pursuit that bring pleasure mixed with sorrow (like Ixion’s pursuit of Hera or the children’s pursuit of the rainbow, 766A). The noble and self-controlled lover is different in that he recognizes this kind of illusion and seeks genuine Beauty – Beauty that is divine and intelligible. When he encounters beauty in a visible body, he treats it as an instrument to memory; he embraces and delights in it but that pleasure of physical intercourse inflames his intellect (*dianoian*) even more (766A).

Next, Plutarch turns to an eschatological discussion of Eros. The true lover (and initiate of the god) is promised an afterlife and rebirth. The true lover (*ho alethos erotikos*), when he or she has reached the other world of Justice and has consorted with the Beautiful, grows wings and joins in the continual celebration of Eros’ mysteries, dancing with him in the celestial dance until it is time for him or her to return to the meadows of the Moon and of Aphrodite where they sleep and begin again another existence in this world (766B).

There is, however, a severe side of Eros, one that is displeased and punishes those who reject him, like the ones found in numerous stories. Eros is quick to respond to the

complaints of lovers and quick to punish the unrefined and arrogant (766D). There is a major lacuna at this point, but the discussion picks up with Plutarch's defense of women and their ability to produce *eros*.

4. Conjugal *Eros*: Women's Capability in Achieving *Eros*, and its Viability in Marriage

Plutarch disagrees with a presumably Epicurean tenet, which held that *eros* is generated through the production of sperm – an ability only mature men possess. Plutarch posits that although women are incapable of ejaculation and boys simply cannot ejaculate, still *eros* is generated in them, because the origination of *eros* is common to both genders – despite the fact that each gender has its peculiarities (766D). Plutarch's theory is not confined by the physical aspects and differences between men and women, but instead focuses on the philosophical ability of the sexes. He maintains that the delightful and sacred recollections of the Beautiful, through which the soul acquires wings, can spring from both young and mature women (*parthenon kai gynaikon*) as well as from children and adolescents (*paidon kai...neaniskon*, 766E). The noble lover of beauty does not discriminate against sex (or appropriate age) when he sees a good disposition in the beloved (767A). He perceives the pure and decorous character of the beloved, regardless of sex and age, because it shines through at the right time and with grace. The noble lover can recognize the upright and flawless traces of a shining soul, which lies in a pure body (766F). Unlike the Stoics who believe that virtue only flowers for men, Plutarch believes that the beauty of a modest and decorous character shines through for both men and women (767B). Virtue and Beauty belong to both sexes alike. The lover of human beauty (*ho philokalos kai philanthropos*) is fairly and equally inclined toward both sexes (767A).

Having established that women, too, can both generate *eros* and achieve spiritual *eros*, Plutarch turns back to the arguments Zeuxippus had set forth about love and marriage. Unfortunately, because of a major lacuna in the text, Zeuxippus' detailed arguments have not been preserved. Plutarch, however, provides a summary: Zeuxippus had identified Eros with an uncontrolled desire, which carries the soul to corruption (767C). Zeuxippus echoed what he had heard too often from cantankerous men, who had never been in love, and who complained about their marriages, and his arguments were extensions of the two traditional reasons for marrying someone: (a) for acquiring a dowry, or (b) for acquiring children. Plutarch says that the first type of married man (i.e. the "gold digger") quarrels with his wife every day about the accounts and keeps her under his thumb. The second type of husband, after he reaps the fruit, either wants to get a divorce or, if he stays married, pays no attention to the marriage and cares not about giving and receiving love (767D). Such relationships are mere cohabitations and not true unions that can lead one to a nobler goal. In the *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, Plutarch distinguishes between *synoikein* (to cohabit) and *sumboiein* (to share a life together). Those who married because of the bride's dowry or in order to procure children are be considered as cohabiting, because they have not mixed their bodies, affairs, status, money, friends, and relatives into one and do not consider everything in common (142F–143A). Plutarch maintains that while procreation and the procurement of

a dowry are reasons for cohabiting, the ideal marriage should include a commonly shared life and the creation of common goals. The marriage of a couple in love, however, is an intimate union (142 F).

Next Plutarch sets out prerequisites for the ideal conjugal union. First, the couple whom Eros strikes and inspires will live under the same roof but they will understand the terms “mine” and “not mine” in their Platonic sense (767D). In real life, however, Plutarch still promotes the consolidation of the couple’s finances, but the property and the estate should be said to be the husband’s even if the wife has contributed more (140E–F). The spiritual lovers unite not only their finances and bodies together, but also their souls. The philosophical lovers, although separated in body, join their souls with such force that they meld together (cf. 142 F, 769); they neither wish to be separate entities nor do they believe that they are (767E). Conjugal Eros is the guide to the vision of the Form of the Beautiful (Teodorsson (2004/2005) 105–122). Second, there has to be moderation in respect to sensual pleasures with each other (cf. 441A); such moderation is a crucial necessity in a marriage (767E). So, if a husband who is intemperate in his pleasures commits an offense with a mistress or a maidservant, his wife ought not to be angry or annoyed but reflect that it is his respect for her that makes her husband share his intemperance or violent behavior with another woman (140B). The husband of a modest and austere wife cannot have her as both a wife and a hetaera (142B–C). On the other hand, when the lamp is removed, that is when a wife’s chastity, faithfulness, discipline, and affection for her husband should become apparent (144E). *Sophrosyne* can be found in both men and women (Pompey, for example, only knew his wife, *Pomp.* 22.4) and it has to be voluntary, free from shame or fear imposed by outside forces or by the law (and opposed to the counterfeit moderation found in the “so-called pederastic” relationships that were discussed earlier). Passion (*pathos*) for either boys or women is not *eros* (769B) and is unfit for the *sophron* and *erotikos*.

The lovers are transformed by the power of Eros, when he is master. Plutarch discusses the conjugal relationship and the role of Eros in it in a language of dominance and subordination. He posits that everyone has a master; the *sophron* and the *erotikos* have as their master Eros. Eros has in himself enough self-control, decorum, and faith, and even if he ever touches a corrupt soul, he turns the lovers (both male and female) away from their other lovers. When Eros becomes the master of one’s soul, even hetaerae and slave girls leave their other lovers (768A; examples in 767 F–768A). When Eros becomes the sole guardian (*kyrios*), lovers are transformed from temple-slaves into free citizens (*eleutheroi*, 768B). Eros cuts down arrogance and breaks down cruelty and bad behavior in the lover. Instead, he brings in shame, silence, calmness, decorum, and obedience to a single person (767D–F).

Earlier in the dialogue, Plutarch had discussed the difficulties a couple could face at the initial stages of marriage in a language of domination and pain. Although at first the young blend well together only with difficulty (*ta nea duskerasta*), after a while they abandon their insolence and arrogance (754C). They quarrel and get angry over the in-laws, sex, physical abuse, jealousy, and rumors; it is up to the wife, however, to keep the peace by acting reasonably (143A–144A), although husbands should avoid causing such pain and disturbance to their wives for the sake of a little pleasure (144D). Blending (*mixis*) occurs with reciprocal hurt (769E). On the one hand, the newly wed husband should not be afraid of the emotional sting that comes at the beginning of a marriage

(cf. 77B). Even if there is a wound, it is not a terrible thing when it happens with a good woman; it is like grafting a tree (769E). On the other hand, the newly wed woman should not feel distaste for her husband because of her first sexual experience (138D–E). And there is another pain with the beginning of pregnancy (cf. 769E). Thankfully, the sting and pain do not last forever. Furthermore, at the beginning Eros causes some effervescence and agitation, but as time goes by this settles down and after it is reduced it produces the best type of stability (769F). It is at the start that married couples should be aware of differences and disputes (138E), because at that point in their marriage they experience waves and struggle under the yoke (more so if they are in love). Their marriage is compared to a ship that does not have a captain (*kubernetes*, 754C). Eros makes stormy and chaotic a marriage of two people who cannot both command and neither of whom will obey. In a marriage there needs to be a captain to rule and another to obey – for no one is his own master and no one is independent. The nurse rules the infant, the teacher the child, the gymnasiarch the *ephebe*, the *erastes* the *merakion*, the law and the *strategos* the citizen. It is assumed that in a marriage, one would obey the older and wiser partner. Unlike Aristotle, but similarly to Xenophon, Plutarch allows for an older, sensible woman, like Ismenodora, to rule the life of a young man, because she will be useful to him with her intelligence and sweet and gentle with her friendship (754D). Otherwise, Plutarch agrees with the conventional notion that the husband is the public face and voice of the marriage and the superior leader of the couple (139C, 139D, 142D; McNamara (1999)). A wife (even a rich one) is expected to resemble and harmonize her life and character with that of her husband (139F). She is not allowed to have either feelings (140A, 140E), friends (140C), or a public persona of her own. She is to speak through her husband and to stay at home and be hidden when he is away (139C, 142C–D). In the *Advice* the husband is compared to a king (140B–C). Wives should submit to their husbands and not try to rule them (142E).

According to Plutarch, then, the master of a marriage is Eros, and a noble woman who is joined to her lawful husband through Eros would be dedicated to him; she would rather endure bears and snakes circling around her than the touch and bed of another man (768B). Such wife is loyal and faithful to her husband, even when he is dead. Like Camma the Gaul, who poisoned the murderer of her husband but died in the process herself (768B–D), although there have been many such examples, both at home and abroad. Surprisingly, Plutarch does not make a similar parallelism for men and say that they, too, are transformed by the power of Eros when he is their master and are changed into loyal and faithful husbands. Such an omission can be explained in two ways: either Plutarch knows that such a transformation in men is not necessary or feasible, or he is making an inadvertent comment about women's nature, i.e. that there is something inherently weak in women in respect of their *sophrosyne* that can be corrected by the power of Eros.

Plutarch addresses the claim that when Aphrodite joins Eros, there cannot be *philia* (768B–E). In other words, some (like Protagenes earlier) claim that *philia* cannot be achieved when the philosophical relationship includes a sexual relationship as well. Plutarch argues that sex with one's wife is the beginning of *philia* as well as a spiritual sharing (769A). Because in an ideal marriage husband and wife show moderation in their sensual desires, their pleasure is short, but their spiritual relationship is long-lasting. The respect (*time*), kindness (*charis*), affection (*agape*), and trust (*pistis*) they show toward

each other every day are the reasons Aphrodite is called “Harmony” by the Delphians. It is not only philosophers, like Plutarch, who maintain that sex with one’s wife is necessary for spiritual reasons; poets and legislators agree as well. Homer called this type of intercourse *philoteta*, and Solon prescribed that a man have intercourse with his wife at least three times a month in order to renew the marriage, like cities renew their treaties (769B). Those who maintain that women’s nature is unsuitable to *philia* but otherwise noble are making an astonishing argument (769C). Many women exhibit not only moderation, intelligence, faithfulness, and justice but also qualities that one finds traditionally in males: manliness, courage, and generosity. They are affectionate toward their children and husbands, but their affection, like a well-disposed land accepting of friendship, does not yield without its share of persuasion and favor. Nature has endowed women with a graceful face, a persuasive voice, and an attractive shape. Immoral women use these qualities for pleasure and deceit, but a *sophron* woman uses them to gain her husband’s kindness and friendship (769C–D). Plutarch closes his defense of women’s nature with some advice for the *sophron* wife. He suggests that any virtuous and decent wife sacrifice to Eros so that the god may be supportive of her marriage and a partner to her nuptials and so that he may adorn her with all the fragrances that befit a woman. Adornment is unnecessary; a woman is beautiful because of her character (141C–E, 142C). Thus, her husband will not be diverted by another (769D). For in marriage to love is a greater good than to be loved. The god Eros rescues one from many errors – and especially those things that can damage and soil a marriage (769D–E). In a good marriage there is no place for aphrodisiacs and love potions, which take away the mind of the ruling partner, thus weakening the partnership (139A).

Plutarch describes the benefits one could derive from conjugal *eros*: stability, union, fellowship, harmony, and children. Although Eros causes some effervescence and agitation at the beginning of the conjugal relationship, as time goes on the best sort of stability is created, a blending through and through of the lovers (769F; cf. Antipater of Tarsus in Stob. 4.22). But the union of those who simply live together is like Epicurus’ atoms that collide and rebound (cf. 1112C). Only Eros creates a true unity and achieves a conjugal fellowship (*gamikes koinonias*, 769F). There is no greater pleasure nor continuous need nor a more beautiful, highly esteemed, and enviable friendship than “when a husband and a wife keep house in perfect harmony” as Homer says in the *Odyssey* (6.183–184). Moreover, the law in every society assists Eros in bringing about procreation; and nature shows that not only humans but even the gods are in need of Eros (770A). Procreation is the principle that moves everything (770B). In this way, Plutarch concludes his praise for conjugal *eros*, placing it on a pedestal for its ability to combine the physical with the spiritual, and the personal with the public (i.e. to create harmony in one’s soul as well as children for the continuation of the species).

5. Political *Eros*: Appropriate and Inappropriate Relationships for Free Citizens (Both Male and Female)

Having completed his praise for conjugal *eros*, one wonders why Plutarch beats a dead horse by steering the discussion back to the pederastic *eros*. He says that unlike conjugal *eros*, pederastic *eros* is inconstant (770B). It cuts humans in half, like a hair an egg

(cf. Pl. *Symp.* 190D–E); it is compared to a hostile land and a tyranny (770B–C). Although there have been a few examples of durable pairings among those who practice pederasty, there are countless such relationships where female lovers are the protagonists – women like Empona (770C–771D) who maintain to the end a most trustworthy fellowship with eager loyalty (770C). Instead, one should call intercourse between men intemperate assault; it has nothing to do with Aphrodite. He explains further: “This is why we place those who enjoy playing the passive part (*hedomenous toi paschein*) in the worst category of vice (*kakias*) and we do not allot them any trust, shame, or friendship” (768E). Plutarch does not refer here to pederastic intercourse between an older and a younger man; that type of intercourse, as we have seen, he accepts. Here Plutarch sides with Daphneus and criticizes the “so-called pederastic” relationships of men of same status (which could include persons of the same age, gender, class, etc.) who have the passive role in a sexual relationship.

While some scholars (e.g. Patterson (1999) 132) maintain that Plutarch, unlike Plato or Musonius Rufus, is not concerned with the political aspect of the conjugal relationship, more recent work has argued otherwise (Swain (1999); Foxhall (1999); Tsouvala (2008)). The author of the biographies of Greek and Roman statesmen was steeped in the politics of the empire. In the *Advice* he states that the statesman who proposes concord in the city, or in the marketplace, or among his friends, should be able to maintain it first and foremost in himself and at home (144B–C; Swain (1999) 95). It is undeniable that in his discussion on Eros in the *Eroticus*, Plutarch uses political language. Intercourse with one’s wife is equated with a treaty that needs to be renewed by cities (769B). The affection a woman feels for her husband and children is compared to a land well disposed and accepting of friendship (769C). The god is described as a tyrant and a king (760D), a magistrate and a regulator (763D). In the rituals associated with him, he is brought from Helicon to the Academy, symbolically making the trip from the wilderness of the mountains to the city (763D). Eros’ liberating influence on the lovers is associated with the manumission of slaves and their newly acquired status of free citizen (768B). *Sophrosyne* and philosophy (or education) are the province of the freeborn and the elite.

Tsouvala (2008), using evidence from both the *Moralia* and the *Lives* of Romulus and Alexander, makes a case for Plutarch’s concern for the political and integrating function of *eros* in the social and civic life of the city and the empire. Despite the violence and injustice Romulus did to the Sabine women, he intermingled and joined the two peoples and thus created a source of strength for his city and its future. Marriage is thus perceived as a political institution that can unite not only separate bodies and individuals, but also families and even enemies in a mutually beneficial relationship. The same notion is plainly clear in the marriages Alexander promoted between Greeks and barbarians and his advice to them to consider their clothes, food, marriage, and lives common, mixed together through blood and offspring (329D). The bridging and joining of nations, he says, is done through lawful *eros*, moderate marriages, and the joint ownership of children (329F). In the *Eroticus*, the relationship between Bacchon and Ismenodora creates rivalry and friction (*stasis*) in the city. Friction and conflict are expressed in the fighting between Plutarch’s family and that of his wife at the beginning of the dialogue; in the theater among the musicians who have gathered from afar to participate in the contests; in the gymnasium between the gymnasiarchs arguing outside Ismenodora’s doors; in the

town among all the members of the community and the tourists; in the quaint Valley of the Muses among the philosophers contending with each other about the existence of the gods and the role of Eros in the family and in society. But ultimately, all's well that ends well. Because the union between Ismenodora and Bacchon has the potential of fulfilling all aspects of Eros, and despite all the initial agitation and discord presented by certain members of the community, the dialogue ends on a happy note. Bacchon's and Ismenodora's wedding bridges all differences as the guests gather for the celebration and the god smiles in approval. Marriage can quell uproar in the polis and join Greeks and Romans into a harmonious and peaceful *synkrisis*. Eros is described as present at, supportive of, and pleased with the marriage at the end of the *Eroticus* (771E; cf. 1102B).

In conclusion, Plutarch's conjugal philosophy is an expression of a political ideology; it is used to suppress different contemporary practices and to impose a unitary social and civic vision. The male lover (*erotikos aner*) is upper-class, freeborn, married, and a "good citizen." The ideology Plutarch puts forth is that this man will love according to nature and law, and marry not only for his own benefit but for the well-being of the polis and the empire as well. Therefore, Plutarch argues against same-sex relationships between freeborn citizens, who fail to make the normative transition from passive, penetrated child to active penetrating man. The goals of marriage are the goals of society; they include procreation, assimilation of resources, the betterment of the individuals in the conjugal unit, and thus the improvement of society as a whole. The offspring of legitimate relationships (a.k.a. marriages) are to become the new citizens and benefactors of the polis and the empire. The rejection of certain same-sex relationships and the promotion of conjugal *eros* as the only lawful (*nomimos*) *eros* by Plutarch at this particular historical point in time may be understood in terms of the societal pressures and changes within Greek society during the empire, as these are perceived by a Greco-Roman aristocrat and statesman. Plutarch's philosophy provides a unitary social vision and a political solution for both Greeks and Romans.

NOTES

- 1 Among the many meanings of *synousia* is the coming together and combining of a variety of things, such as words, sperm, or property. So, it is often difficult to know which meaning is intended every time. I chose "copulation" here because that is the most usual meaning in Plutarch and one he defines in *Mor.* 364D, but "integration of property" is also possible here.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Since Michel Foucault's analysis (1984) of Plutarch's unique strengthening of the marriage bond, there has been much discussion of the treatises on love and marriage, particularly in the *Moralia* (Nikolaïdis (1997); Walcot (1998); Pomeroy (1999); Tsouvala (2008)) and some in the *Lives* as well (Nikolaïdis (1997); Walcot (1998); Beneker (2008) and (2012)). For discussions of Foucault's analysis on the subject, see Patterson (1999); Wohl (1997); Skinner (2005).

CHAPTER 14

The Sympotic Works

Frieda Klotz

1. The Philosopher's Dinner Party: Plutarch's *Table Talk*

Why do some people always turn up late for dinner? Is it because they never refuse an invitation, even when they don't have time for it? Is it because they don't mind making others wait, being rude, snobbish, and oligarchical? Or are such guests just more self-controlled and contained than those who arrive early?

These possibilities, and dozens of others, are discussed with urgency and seriousness in Plutarch's *Table Talk*. The work, in nine books, contains some ninety-five questions, all analyzed, if not answered, in detail. Other topics include: Whether women are colder in temperament than men, or hotter; Why old men are very fond of strong wine (1.7); Whether the chicken or the egg came first (2.3); When is the best time of day to have sex (3.6); Whether it is possible for new diseases to come into being and from what causes (8.9); and Why we trust our dreams least in the autumn (8.10). Anyone who has wondered about these subjects is sure to find stimulating discussion in Plutarch's *Table Talk*, although finding an answer is a whole other matter.

The *Table Talk* is part of a long tradition of sympotic writing that intersects with second-century intellectual currents. Xenophon and Plato had established the symposium in textual form in the Classical period and their accounts of Socrates' philosophical chatter remained highly influential well into Plutarch's time. Several centuries later the Imperial era saw a flowering of miscellanistic works that gathered large swaths of information into literary form. Plutarch's *Table Talk* is the earliest extant instance of a genre that blends miscellany with the symposium. In the third century CE Athenaeus wrote a *Deipnosophists*, while the Roman Aulus Gellius composed a set of sympotic conversations called *Attic Nights* that explicitly drew on Plutarch. Lucian, meanwhile, authored a brilliant, misanthropic spoof on the philosophic-sympotic genre, *Symposium*,

or the *Lapiths*, which ended with its characters collapsing in drunken violence. But Plutarch's *Table Talk* is unsurpassed in its artful combination of styles; nor is it Plutarch's only work of this type. He also wrote *Dinner of the Seven Sages*, which stretches the genre in a different direction, and to which I will return later in this chapter.

The desire to retain and display knowledge found in texts of this period often seems obsessive to modern readers. "It is sometimes hard to avoid the impression that accumulation of knowledge is the driving force for all Imperial prose literature," König and Whitmarsh suggest (König and Whitmarsh (2007) 3). By exhibiting their education, or *paideia*, members of the elite proved their status and to amass knowledge in miscellanistic works was a literary performance of one's education. Plutarch participates in the trend: the characters in *Table Talk* engage in intellectual contests, reflecting on and reworking earlier texts, enabling the author Plutarch to show off his own learning in the process. At the same time the *Table Talk* is a philosophical work whose principal aim is to educate the reader and its pedagogic focus could itself be seen as evidence of its author's elite role. As Whitmarsh puts it, "in the highly competitive world of elite ambition (or *philotimia*), differences in factions between paideutic methods and ideals mapped out the struggles within the elite for prestige and status" (Whitmarsh (2001) 6).

Yet today, the *Table Talk*, which is one of Plutarch's most delightful works, is one of the least read. Like many of the essays in the *Moralia* it has never attained the popularity of the *Lives*, even though miscellanistic works played a dominant role in ancient, Byzantine, and Western medieval culture (Morgan (2011) 55). In the nineteenth century Emerson wrote a *Table-Talk* of his own, indicating that he had read Plutarch's text, although his verdict on it was negative. In a treatise on Plutarch he opined: "Except as historical curiosities, little can be said in behalf of the scientific value of the *Opinions of the Philosophers*, the *Questions* and the *Symposiacs*. They are, for the most part, very crude opinions; many of them so puerile that one would believe that Plutarch in his haste adopted the notes of his younger auditors" (Emerson (1904) 309–310). This is perhaps symptomatic of a trend: by the twentieth century interest in the text had truly died away, as modern scholars began to view "all-post Classical societies ... as secondary, non-original, non-authentic" (Whitmarsh (2001) 28) and Plutarch's corpus came to be valued primarily as a historical source.

The *Table Talk's* content ranges widely through the fields of literature, philosophy, science, sociology, and etiquette. Its sprawling form has frustrated scholars, who have struggled to make sense of its unruly and seemingly illogical structure and who, as with the *Lives*, have trawled it for arcane factual information rather than assessing it as a literary text. On closer examination, however, *Table Talk* is a thematically crucial component of the Plutarchan corpus, as recent research has begun to acknowledge. To an extent it is a source of biographical detail; but the biography is complicated, for it looks back to Plato's presentation of Socrates (for arguments against a straight, "expressive realism" reading of texts, see Whitmarsh (2001) 30–31). *Table Talk* explicitly fashions itself as a Platonic work, referring to portraits of the philosopher by Xenophon and Plato but also building, altering, and reworking Platonism, in this way marking a creative contribution to Middle Platonist philosophy.

Despite its amiable tone, therefore, *Table Talk* has a strongly didactic purpose. Plutarch and his cohorts are characters and models for the reader, enacting philosophical behavior while engaging in philosophical analysis. The dinner parties' constitution is not random

but calculated, mixing Greeks with Romans, younger men with adults, and farmers with doctors and philosophers (the only absent contingent is women). There are other subtle differences among the participants. König points out, “This stress on the cultural homogeneity of the speakers is regularly nuanced by references to the local origins of individual participants, who are drawn from a range of cities across the Greek world. In much the same way, Plutarch pays frequent attention to their differences of philosophical persuasion or of profession” (König (2007) 62). The narrator, Plutarch, is literally (re) presenting himself and his social milieu, revealing (or creating) facets of his character that he wishes the reader to observe and imitate.

With its quasi-autobiographical form, *Table Talk* mirrors Plutarch’s contemporary environment in a way that the *Lives* do not. Plutarch lived in the second century under the reign of emperors Trajan and Hadrian, and *Table Talk* explores the customs of Romans as well as those of Greeks and other ethnic groups (e.g. *Praef.* 1.612E, 1.3, 4.2, 4.4 *Praef.* 7.702D, 7.4). It is dedicated to Sosius Senecio, a Roman friend who also features as a character in the text. Sosius was a “close friend” of Trajan (Jones (1971) 31) and “a cardinal link between the philosopher [Plutarch] and Rome” (Jones (1971) 55).

Plutarch dedicated his *Lives* to Sosius, who reappears again as the addressee of *On Progress in Virtue*. We know he was a fairly important political figure. A man of military achievements, he held the position of consul twice. He may have come from the Greek East (Jones (1971) 55), but this is disputed (Duff (1999) 289). Sosius seems to have been friendly with Plutarch’s sons as well as with Plutarch (Jones (1971) 55), and this has led scholars to assume he was younger than the philosopher. A junior role for Sosius would accord with the paternalistic attitude Plutarch takes toward young men in other texts, where he paints himself as a source of worldly philosophical advice.

As a gesture of affection the dedication is expressive; as an act of textual self-positioning it has strategic value. Sosius’ name features in the text’s opening lines: “The saying, ‘I dislike a drinking companion with a good memory,’ some say, my dear Sosius Senecio (*o Sossie Senekion*), was meant by its author to refer to masters of ceremonies (*epistathmous*) who are rather tiresome men” (612C).¹ Plutarch later continues, “since you, too, believe that forgetfulness of folly is in truth ‘wise,’ as Euripides says, yet to consign to utter oblivion all that occurs at a drinking party is not only opposed to what we call the friend-making character of the dining table, but also has the most famous of the philosophers to bear witness against it – Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dio of the Academy” (612DE).

Sosius was inclined toward philosophy, as this dedication shows while also demonstrating that Plutarch is on jesting terms with him. Simon Swain has suggested that Sosius was an educated but not particularly brilliant figure (Swain (1987) 47), yet within *Table Talk*, there is no sign that he is an unsophisticated dinner guest (see Jones (1971) 55). Plutarch assumes that the Roman is familiar with the philosophers whom he lists, and Sosius participates easily in conversation. Plutarch places a distinctly non-Greek figure at the heart of his dialogue, but one who fits easily into a Hellenic sympotic context.

In addressing the *Table Talk* to a Roman, and including him in it, therefore, Plutarch makes a number of points: Romans can be learned, just like Greeks, but, somewhat differently, he suggests that they can learn from Greeks. The heterogeneous mix at these dinner parties is also telling, for with its diverse cast of farmers, philosophers, doctors,

demagogues, and sophists, the text is polyphonic, an idyllic template for agonistic friendship and philosophy.

As I noted earlier, the *Table Talk* is semi-autobiographical and Plutarch has a complicating, central presence. Indeed, “Plutarch” divides in two; as a narrator, telling the reader what happened at these parties, and as a character who attended them. The Plutarchan character is harder to pin down than might at first appear. Other guests never address him directly, nor does he refer to himself by name. This both attracts attention and helps the reader identify with him, for his anonymity encourages us to view events with his eyes as an unnamed shifting ego through whom the proceedings are filtered. Such complexity, along with its self-conscious rootedness in Platonic tradition (in which the Socratic character is molded to various ends), should discourage us from reading the *Table Talk* as straight biography (for more detail on this see Klotz (2007) 654–655).

The symposiasts in *Table Talk* do not always reach answers to their questions, which are variously paradoxical, logical, and aporetic. Plutarch allows his characters to stray from one possibility to another, and although it is clear that some answers are preferred to others he discourages readers from assuming that philosophy, or the text, has a single end point. In the last section of the final book (9.15) he concludes his unwieldy work with a brief narratorial remark: “This was about the end (*tauta schedon*), Sosius Senecio, of the learned conversation then held at the feast of the Muses in the company of the excellent Ammonius” (748D). The word *schedon*, weighted with ambiguity, warns us to take everything the text records with a pinch of caution. Far from being complete transcripts, these conversations are determinedly whimsical memories, artfully pieced together by an elusive narrator.

The apparent disorder of the *Table Talk* has created an aporia of its own among scholars. In one essay Jason König begins by asking, “How can we make sense of writing which is apparently marked by lack of system and lack of order?” (König (2007) 44). König argues that the work exemplifies “different kinds of order” and ultimately offers “a carefully orchestrated vision of how we can draw coherence out of its own fragmented aggregation of material, if only we read with proper philosophical attention.” The active reader will use reading as a starting-point for philosophical development, and may find in Plutarch’s *Table Talk* characters that function as models in this process (see König (2007) 45).

2. A Socratic Start

Following the proem, question 1.1 is programmatic and Plutarch opens by explicitly noting its importance: “The question of philosophical talk over the cups I have placed first of all” (612F). He proceeds to ask his friends how appropriate it is to talk about philosophy at a dinner party, mentioning men who praise the Persians for “doing their drinking and dancing with their mistresses rather than with their wives ... [T]hey hold that philosophy is not a suitable thing to make sport with and that we are not on these occasions inclined to seriousness” (613A). In this view – which Crato and then the other guests will soon refute – dinner parties are the place for theatricals, drama, and drinking.

Teodorsson states that “by putting this question at the very beginning of his work Plutarch shows that he wants to define its scope” (Teodorsson (1989) vol. 1, 38). The

real issue, however, is not just the uncovering of what the right topic of conversation for a drinking party might be, but the definition of how to make philosophy acceptable at a social gathering and how a philosopher should behave. These concerns recur at intervals throughout *Table Talk* (see esp. 613 DF). Plutarch is reworking Plato's symposium for a modern era, when actual philosophers are thin on the ground and the nature of philosophy itself must be rewritten and renewed.

Both Plutarch and his addressee Sosius play a prominent part in this first *quaestio*, and a number of statements foreground their relationship. Plutarch says to Sosius, *memnesai gar* ("for you remember") the evening. Friendship is crucial to Plutarch, but it is important to be discriminating. For instance, question 5.5 in *Table Talk* focuses on the problem of "those who invited large numbers to dinner" (678B). Plutarch praises the doctor Onesicrates for inviting *ou polous alla tous sphodra sunetheis kai oikeiotatous* ("not a large crowd but only some very dear friends and close relatives," 678D), echoing the sentiments of other essays in the *Moralia* such as *On Having Many Friends*. Plutarch's consistency on this subject makes the personalized focus of the proems all the more apt. He may have wanted his writing to reach a wider audience, but still the text as we have it is intimate and addressed to one person.

The special nature of their relationship is evident again when Sosius invites the diners to discuss the nature of philosophical talk at a dinner party (613C) and Plutarch enthusiastically responds: "When you invited us to discuss the matter, I said that it seemed to me necessary to consider first the character of the guests" (613D). It is expressive that Plutarch does not start the conversation, but rather answers Sosius' request, since it shows the responsive nature of their discourse. But the invitation functions as a starting-point for Plutarch. Once he joins in he takes over, explaining first that not every dinner party will have guests as brilliant as Plato's, and outlining how to blend pleasure with learning, before arguing that philosophers should avoid heated discussion (which would put other guests off philosophy). With his reciprocal opening and didactic subject-matter, Plutarch both sets an example of philosophical table talk and establishes the agenda for what is to follow.

In the preface to Book 1, Plutarch positions the *Table Talk* in a literary tradition, citing as his models the sympotic works of "Plutarch, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus, and Dio of the Academy" (612DE). In the first question, Plutarch now makes clear that Plato is his main model, most specifically Plato's *Symposium*, a text that was well known and extremely widely read and admired in the Second Sophistic era.

Plato knew how to make philosophy palatable. In his *Symposium*, Plutarch points out that the classical philosopher:

"When he talks about the final cause and the primary good – in short, when he discourses about divine matters – does not labor his proof nor gird himself for a fight and get his customary tight and unbreakable hold, but with simple and easy premises [*hugroterois lemmasi*], with examples [*paradeigmasi*], and with mythical legends [*mythologiais*], he brings the company into agreement with him." (614D)

Given the preoccupation with the past that obtained in literature of the Second Sophistic (Whitmarsh (2001) 6; see also Schmitz), it is no surprise when Plutarch tells us that in

Plato's day it was easier to find properly philosophical dinner guests – everyone at Plato's *Symposium* was *philologous* (613D). Although the *Symposium* is a crucial model for the *Table Talk*, perfect dinner guests are hard to come by in Plutarch's world, and the philosopher will adapt himself and his philosophy accordingly.

Plutarch begins his speech with reference to Plato's *Symposium* and then concedes that if his fellow-diners are of less intellectual weight than Plato's classical models, the philosopher should modify his arguments (613D). To make his point, he employs an anecdote from the Archaic period, remarking that the philosopher should learn from the experience of Peisistratus.

“For when some quarrel arose between Peisistratus and his sons, and he saw the pleasure it gave his enemies, he summoned the assembly into session and announced that, though he wished to persuade his sons, since they were stubborn he would be persuaded by them and follow them. In just such a manner a philosopher too, when with drinking companions who are unwilling to listen to his speeches (*tous logous*), will change his role, fall in with their mood, and not object to their activity so long as it does not transgress propriety. For he knows that, while men practice oratory only when they talk, they practice philosophy when they are silent, when they jest, even, by Zeus, when they are the butt of jokes, and when they make fun of others.” (613F–614A, translation modified)

Notably, in his use of examples, Plutarch is providing readers with one. Just a few lines after recounting this story he notes:

“There are ... topics of discussion that are particularly suitable for a drinking party. Some are supplied by history; others it is possible to take from current events; some contain many lessons bearing on philosophy, many on piety; some induce an emulous enthusiasm for courageous and great-hearted deeds, and some for charitable and humane deeds. If one makes unobtrusive use of them to entertain and instruct (*diapaidagoge*) his companions as they drink, not the least of the evils of intemperance will be taken away.” (614B, translation slightly altered)

Plutarch's speech on using paradigms is framed by exemplary accounts featuring Peisistratus and Plato, iconic figures from history and philosophy respectively. He both draws on examples and functions as one, showing his internal audience how to behave philosophically at a party, and to readers demonstrating how to integrate philosophy into either life or text.

Plutarch speaks with authority in this question, even issuing orders to his listeners. He prescribes the content of conversation: “The matters of inquiry must be in themselves rather simple and easy, the topics familiar, the subjects for investigation suitably uncomplicated” (614D). His tone is didactic, perhaps because he is in the company of philosophically oriented friends. On other occasions he may resort to persuasion. The Peisistratean anecdote emphasizes this: if, like Peisistratus, the philosopher cannot persuade his friends (*peisai*), he should be persuaded by them and follow them (*peisesthai kai akolouthesein*, 613E).

Persuasion is a familiar rhetorical technique, and Plutarch draws on a rhetorical *topos* to make his point (for an overview of its literary and rhetorical function in the Classical era see Buxton (1982)). He reinterprets the gesture of Helen from *Odyssey* 4:

Those who mix alkanet [a plant] in their wine and sprinkle their floors with infusions of vervain [a root with medicinal powers] and maidenhair [a tropical fern] because, as they

believe, these things contribute to some extent to the cheerfulness and gaiety of their guests, do so in imitation of Homer's Helen, who secretly added a drug (*hupopharmattousan*) to the undiluted wine; but they do not see that that legend too, having fetched a long course from Egypt, has its end in the telling of appropriate and suitable stories (*eis logous epieikeis kai prefontas eteleutesen*). For as they drink, Helen tells her guests a tale about Odysseus: "What deed he dared to do, that hero strong / his body with unseemly stripes o'ercome." (614BC)

The narrator puts an allegorical spin on Helen's drugs: "Men of breeding (*hoi de charientes*), even if they talk straightforward philosophy (*kan ap' eutheias philosophosin*), manage the conversation at such times by the persuasiveness (*dia tou pithanou*) rather than the compulsion (*mallon e biastikon*) of their arguments" (614C).

This passage is striking for several reasons. By introducing a metaphor Plutarch imbues his text with the grace to which he refers. The passage is a famous one from a favorite poet and Helen is an archetypal figure of seductive persuasion. There is also an element of empathy to the tale – "This, I take it, was the 'assuaging' (*nepenthes*) and pain-allaying drug (*pharmakon kai anodunon*), a story with a timeliness (*kairon*) appropriate to the experiences and circumstances of the moment" (614C). Philosophy is not intended as a harsh tool; philosophers should bestow their teachings on others as a pleasurable, pain-allaying drug.

Through this Odyssean allusion, Plutarch adopts a knowledgeable pose, showing, and showing off, his cultural status. It was Gorgias who most famously linked Helen with persuasion in his *Encomium*. Another sophist, the Second Sophistic author Philostratus, would also deploy her in the preface of his *Lives of the Sophists* referring to the same passage as Plutarch, when she drops drugs into her guests' drinks. For Plutarch the motif signifies words that are appropriate to the environment and the moment (*logos echon chairon*... 614C).

As with his Peisistratean *exemplum*, Plutarch reveals himself to be adept at employing persuasive discourse later in the *Table Talk*. In Book 7, he and Euthydemus, Patrocleas, Florus, and others get into a heated discussion about the nature of certain plant seeds. The conversation touches on Plato, but in the context of arcane learning rather than direct philosophical analysis:

When we have had readings from Plato in company, the sort of person he calls "horncast" (*kerasbolos*) or "obdurate" (*ateramon*) has always set us to puzzling – not who he is, for it is clear that people used to believe that seeds which touch the horns of oxen produce grain that is "obdurate" and so, by transfer, referred to a self-willed and unbending person as "horncast" and "obdurate." Our difficulty was rather to know the reason itself why seeds which touch the horns of cattle are so affected. (700C)

The question is a vexed one and the narrator tells readers that he usually tried to avoid it because Theophrastus included it in a litany of unanswerable natural phenomena (this gives him an opportunity to list some others). But "at a dinner in Delphi" some of Plutarch's friends insisted that he discuss the subject, arguing that men are better able to discuss such matters when they have taken drink. He first resists, getting support from Euthydemus, "my colleague in priesthood," and Patrocleas, "my son-in-law." Nevertheless the debate continues, and Plutarch's Roman friend Mestrius Florus

becomes impatient, complaining the mens' contributions were "childish" (*paidian*) and "foolish" (*phluaron*). At this impasse Plutarch adds his own *pharmakon* to the discourse, telling Florus, "I have found a potion (*exeurek'* ... *pharmakon*) that will make you leap into the argument against us so that you too may lend a hand in solving some of the problems proposed" (701A). It is fitting that Plutarch, as symposiarch and as narrator of the text, should possess the *pharmakon* – the drug – with which both to resolve disputes and to solve the philosophical problem. Soothing words and fitting arguments allow the philosopher to revive flagging dialogue and put an end to dissonance. Plutarch, like Helen, calms his companions and controls the dialogue's trajectory, manipulating everyone into a philosophical and sociable harmony.

3. The Muses of Book 9

In *Table Talk* the dinners occur in a variety of occasions, so that time and place are mobile and shifting (see König (2007) 64). Venues in Book 1 include the house of Plutarch's brother Timon (1.2); Plutarch's own home in Chaeronea (1.7); one of Sosius' dinners (1.5); the house of Plutarch's Roman friend Mestrius Florus (1.9); and a celebration at Athens for the poet Sarapion when he won the prize for a chorus he directed (1.10).

The type of occasion varies too: it may be informal, involving just friends and family (7.9); or formal, for instance "at Eleusis after the mysteries, the climax of the festival" when Plutarch and his friends had dinner with Glaucias, the rhetorician (2.2). Other dinners are political celebrations, like 2.10, where Plutarch tells us: "When I was holding the eponymous archonship at home (*oikoi*), most of the dinners were portion-banquets, and each man at the sacrifices was allotted his share of the meal." He divulges criticisms others make of him which become the basis for discussion: "This was wonderfully pleasing to some, but others blamed the practice as unsociable and vulgar and thought the dinners ought to be restored again to the customary style when my term as archon was over" (642F).

Often the location of a banquet is not specified (1.4), and discussions spill over from one question to another, apparently without the operation of formal constraints. The casual framing of conversation mirrors the spontaneity of dialogue Plutarch advocates for dinner parties. Just as the symposiarch should discreetly oversee behavior at such events, so the narrator Plutarch bestows a subtle order on his unwieldy narrative.

While many earlier books show him as an authoritative, paternalistic figure even possessing political power, in the last book Plutarch recalls an early dinner party, which took place when he was a younger man. In Book 9, all of the questions occur in a single place: in Athens, during the festival of the Muses, and in the house of Plutarch's philosophy teacher Ammonius. As Teodorsson remarks, "there are seven participants – more than in any other talk – and several different opinions are presented" (Teodorsson (1996) vol. 3, 345). The ninth book is therefore "a culminating example of *logoi* suitable at a drinking party" (Stadter (1999) 487).

In the book's preface the narrator pays homage to the Muses with a self-conscious flourish.

The ninth book of *Table Talk* (*sumposiakon*), Sosius Senecio, contains the conversations held at Athens during the festival of the Muses, the reason being that the number nine is peculiarly

appropriate to the Muses. Should it prove that the number of questions exceeds the customary ten, you must not be surprised. It was my duty to render to the Muses all that belonged to the Muses, and not to commit the sacrilege of robbing them of anything; in fact, it would need an even finer and larger offering than this to repay my debt to them. (736C)

Ammonius was a *strategos* at Athens (736D), who in this question invites teachers of boys to his house for dinner after hearing the young men perform. It is a perfect blend of rhetoric, philosophy, art, and power. Education – of a Platonic nature – is in the foreground, and the narrator tells us that the young men study “literature, geometry, rhetoric, or music” (*geometrian kai ta rhetorika kai mousiken* 736D).

Despite the narrator’s unwillingness to pin down absolute numbers in the proem of Book 9, numerology is a constant element in this final set of philosophical quandaries, indeed, one that is inevitably highlighted by that opening statement. The Muses were nine in number and the overflowing enthusiasm for dialogue that they inspire in this book produces fifteen discussions, as Plutarch’s discourses exceed the stated number as promised. In the *E of Delphi* Plutarch revealed a predilection for numerology, expounding the many interpretations of the letter epsilon (the symbol for 5 in Greek). By leaving the actual number of discussions open in this proem, the narrator creates a formal uncertainty that will not immediately be resolved, and artfully suggests a tension between spontaneous conversation and the static written word. The importance of 9.14 is highlighted by its own foregrounding of numbers; toward the beginning, Ammonius asks the rhetorician Herodes, “Why nine, neither more nor less? Could you tell us that?” (744A). If this book and this question (9.14) mark the final point in a series of paradigmatic occasions, it is striking that Plutarch is in the presence of his teacher, assuming the role of subordinate rather than an authoritative figure.

The subject of conversation reflects Plutarch’s personal interests. The setting is Ammonius’ house in Athens, but with the Muses as a focal point its psychological geography (Brenk’s phrase (1998) 50, of the *Eroticus*) is Hesiodic and Boeotian. Plutarch has expressed his love for his native Chaeronea in Boeotia elsewhere (*Life of Demosthenes* 2.1). F.E. Brenk wrote of the *Eroticus* that “Ploutarchos revises his countryman Hesiodos’ tale of earthy, naturalistic *eros*” (Brenk (1998) 53), and in *Table Talk* 9, Plutarch again revises Hesiod, who explicated the origins of the Muses in the *Theogony*.

Hesiod is therefore the starting-point for discussion. At the beginning of the meal the men sing “to the lyre Hesiod’s verses about the birth of the Muses” (*pros ten luran ek ton hesiodou ta peri ten ton mouson genesin*, 743C). Plutarch and his friends from Athens revisit Hesiodic intellectual territory, making it a site of contest and debate until Plutarch takes charge of the discussion and blends Hesiodic themes with his own Middle Platonic philosophy. As he rewrites Plato for his belated, modern era, so too Plutarch brings the Muses into his sympotic sphere, reframing the deities to fit his own philosophical agenda.

The atmosphere is a little more muted than in earlier dialogues, as Plutarch cedes authority to his teacher. Ammonius guides the men, just as Plutarch and his friends directed the conversation of youths and students in other books. For instance, after Herodes says he wants to claim the Muses for the orator’s sphere, Ammonius returns the conversation to its original subject, asking, “But why nine, neither more nor less?” When Herodes responds that nine is “on the tongue of every man, and of every woman too, as having the distinction of being the first square of the first odd number, and the first

product of odd numbers, since it can of course be divided into three equal numbers” (744A), Ammonius smiles at him (*epimeidiasas*), praises him, and adds to his own explanation. As if the men are intimidated, there is then a silence, “whereupon Ammonius encouraged us to attack the problem” (744B), and this time Plutarch’s brother Lamprias responds.

Ammonius’ actions in encouraging the other men echo those of Plutarch in earlier books, foregrounding the relationship between teacher and pupil and reinforcing how the philosophical teacher should behave. In Book 2, for instance, Plutarch held the position of archon in Chaeronea, his home town. The dinner guest Hagias argued against Plutarch’s custom of allocating each man a particular portion of food and argued that everyone should share instead. “We praised Hagias for his remarks (*epi toutois eudokimesanti to Hagia*),” Plutarch says, “then urged Lamprias to attack him” (643E). In a later book again, Plutarch observes of the younger men present: “We heartily approved the ingenuity of the young men because they did not fall upon the obvious arguments, but had a good supply of their own attempts at a solution” (656A). Through this dynamic, older, more authoritative men urge on and promote younger ones while guiding discussion. Only towards *Table Talk*’s end, in a retrospectively enacted logic, does the reader see that it is his Ammonius who has influenced Plutarch’s pedagogy.

Just as the issues raised in the first question foreshadow the concerns of the later books, so this penultimate discussion looks back to them. The orators, doctors, and philosophers in this *quaestio* dispute to whose realm the Muses belong and offer explanations for their number, their concerns looking back to those of earlier sections (in particular, question 1.1). Herodes the teacher of rhetoric begins by arguing against “you who try to drag Calliope away from us rhetoricians” (743D). His words echo the familiar old dispute between rhetoric and philosophy which started with Plato’s *Phaedrus* and which had emerged in the first *quaestio* when Crato said it was different to exclude philosophy from a dinner party than to exclude rhetoric (which is more dispensable).

Ammonius, as the benign dinner host, smoothes over Herodes’ sophistic angst with gentle flattery, remarking that “it would be wrong ... to resent your laying a hand, ‘even a mighty hand’ [an echo of Hom. *Il.* 3] on the Muses” (743E), and returns the conversation to the original topic of discussion. Plutarch’s brother Lamprias next injects serious numerology into the discourse, stating that “the ancients (*hoi palaioi*) knew of three Muses only,” and suggesting all branches of knowledge stem from them: philosophy, rhetoric, and mathematics. At this, Trypho, a physician, complains that doctors have been left out. He contradicts Lamprias and argues the three main Muses arose from divisions within the universe. The Peripatetic philosopher Menephylus observes that “Necessity is a thing devoid of art; it is Persuasion that is artistic and dear to the Muses. Hence, I think, the Muse ‘hates intolerable Necessity’ far more than does the Charm of Empedocles” (745CD). This remark looks back to Book 1 where the concept of Persuasion held weight.

Ammonius steps in again to note that the necessity of the human world is far more constraining than the philosophical necessity that exists amongst the gods. The universe must have rules, for “the necessity that holds sway among the gods is not intolerable nor, as I believe, resistant to persuasion either, nor yet coercive, except for wicked men” (745D). Necessity is a necessary law and Ammonius blends it with Persuasion, affirming its benevolent role in the cosmos. He reworks the myth of Homer’s Sirens to give it a

Platonic sense. Persuasion is “the helpmeet of the arts of state and society” who casts “her calming spell on the tumultuous element in us and gently ... recall[s] our errant steps when they have lost the path and set[s] them in their place” (746A). Having restated Plutarch’s earlier conceptualization of persuasion on a cosmological level, Ammonius concludes with his customary quote (Plutarch tells us) from Xenophanes.

The layering of conversation, each speech making a different contribution and being replaced, in turn, by others, echoes the structure of question 1.1, where Plutarch’s opening aroused Crato’s response, which in turn led Senecio and then Plutarch (again) to join in. It also evokes Plato’s *Symposium*, where five speakers offered their thoughts on love before Socrates took over to expound Diotima’s secrets. Now after everyone else has spoken, it is time for Plutarch to join in, but before doing so the narrator recalls that Ammonius “urged each of us to speak up and say what he thought. For a short time I kept quiet (*micron diasiopesas*)” (746B). His silence reminds us that (although he will go on to dominate the discourse) Plutarch is ostensibly not a dominant character in this question, but a student in the presence of his teacher.

In his contribution Plutarch leans on Ammonius’ exposition (like a good student) but also reworks it (like an excellent one). Ammonius had located the Muses in the celestial sphere, circling around eight realms of the cosmos, but Plutarch transposes them to earth, where they are needed because “mistakes and excesses and transgressions are numerous” (746C) here. He draws the subject away from celestial philosophy, returning to the notion of Hesiod’s Boeotian Muses – human beings, he says, need “divine ... tutelage” (*hekasten horo megales kai theias hos alethos paidagogias deomenen* 746D).

Plutarch develops Hesiod’s designation of Calliope to statesmen and kings and reiterates, from Book 1, Crates’ notion that philosophy is the art of life (613B), observing that “life consists partly of serious activity (*spoudes*) and partly of sport (*paidias*), and adding that we need to act artistically and without excess (*mousikos kai metrios*)” (746C). Plutarch himself proffers Plato’s view that two principles inspire each person, innate desire for pleasure and acquired belief that aims at what’s best (746D), and argues that the Muse Calliope guides us in assimilating these impulses. Thus Plutarch intertwines Plato’s *Phaedrus* with Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and gives the other Muses roles that suit a sympotic context, redefining the Muses to fit his own priorities and granting them the Plutarchan sphere of the symposium as their realm.

In accord with the principles of shared authority that appear elsewhere in the *Table Talk* (see 615BC), Plutarch does not speak at all in the final question, 9.15. Instead Ammonius has a lengthy monologue in which he bewails the current state of dance, stating that “to-day nothing enjoys the benefits of bad taste (*kakomousias*) so much as dancing” (748C). Although Ammonius laments change and modernity, his speech has an affirming effect, for as Schlapbach argues, by participating in the philosophical banquet the men create “another sort of link with ancient Greek tradition, since one of the functions of the symposium has always been to offer a space for the remembrance of the past” (Schlapbach (2011) 163).

The Plutarchan narrator recounts these last events, and concludes the *Table Talk* with that brief remark, referring just to the events of Book 9: “This was about the end (*tauta schedon*), Sosius Senecio, of the learned conversation then held at the feast of the Muses in the company of the excellent Ammonius.” The last lines of the *Table Talk* leave open the possibility of further conversations with the subtle use of *schedon*, thrown in to absolve

the narrator of absolute authority over his massive report; in the same way the polyphonic depiction of philosophers and their friends at dinner has left open the reader's response. Plato, with his absence from his dialogues, evaded full responsibility for his interpretation of Socrates' teaching; Plutarch has his own way of maintaining an unbounded position.

4. Wise Men at Dinner

If Plutarch's presence in the *Table Talk* raises questions, his absence from the *Dinner [Symposion] of the Seven Sages* makes that text no easier to interpret. The *Seven Sages* brings together the wisest figures in the Greek imaginary landscape, with little concern for chronological credibility (though the list is prone to variation (Mossman (1997) 123). Thus, Thales, Bias, Pittacus, Solon, Chilon, Cleobulus, and Anacharsis all gather, along with other guests, for a feast at the house of Periander. A tyrant, also known for murdering his wife, Periander is sometimes included in this grouping but here merely plays the role of their host. The text has evoked a mixed response from scholars. Even D.A. Russell, who is a sympathetic interpreter of Plutarch's other works, offers an assessment of it that echoes Emerson's remark about *Table Talk*, suggesting that, "One gets the impression of an educational work, addressed to a very young audience, full of instructive stories and themes" (Russell (1973) 36). Lawrence Kim detects "a certain ambivalence" in Plutarch's own view of the sages (Kim (2009) 492) and notes that the antagonistic nature of the anecdotes that they tell is not well suited to the Plutarchan conception of the symposium (Kim (2009) 486). The interactions between them – laughter, silence, and agonistic conversation – mirror the behaviors at other Plutarchan symposia but lack the communal sense present elsewhere.

The dialogue opens with Diocles, a seer, agreeing to tell his companion Nicarchus (about whom we know nothing) what happened at the party. He disabuses Nicarchus of errors in an earlier account: "For in the first place, the dinner was not of the Seven alone, as you and your friends have been told, but of more than twice that number, including myself; for I was on intimate terms (*sunethes*) with Periander by virtue of my profession, and I was also the host of Thales, for he stayed at my house by command of Periander. In the second place, your informant, whoever he was, did not report the conversation correctly; apparently he was not one of those at the dinner" (146BC). In form this echoes the thrice-removed opening of Plato's *Symposium*, with its awareness of plural narratives and Apollodorus' correction of what his acquaintance had already heard. Shoring up the Platonic ambiance, Deocles goes on to tell how he strolled with Thales to the party – an event that recalls the walking that occurs at the start of Plato's *Symposium* (and indeed at the start of Plato's *Phaedrus*).

The evening divides into two main parts, the second half demarcated by the departure of the women (Kim (2009) 482). Deocles recounts that as he, Thales, and Neilo Xenus of Naucratis made their way toward dinner, Thales touched on typical sympotic topics, such as the nature of power and whether guests should prepare for a banquet just as a host does: for, he explained, "an unsavoury dish can be declined, and if wine be poor, one may find refuge with the water-sprites; but a guest at dinner who gives the others a headache and is churlish and uncivil, ruins and spoils the enjoyment of any wines and viands or of any girl's music" (147F). As they reach the door, a herdsman shows them

a strange creature, half-human and half-horse. Neiloxenus averts his face in horror, but Thales crudely jokes that Periander should not let such young men work with horses, or else should provide wives for them (149E). The conversation at dinner is uncomfortable, since the sages discuss questions of governance and government, giving terse opinions about how a ruler should render his government palatable to subjects (151B) – topics that understandably distress their despotic host (152B, 154D). In the second half the sages fade to the background, allowing the more ordinary figures to participate, and the speeches become longer and more colorful. Periander's brother Gorgus bursts in and utters an embedded tale about how Arion has been rescued by a dolphin (presented as an event that has just occurred). Shortly afterwards the evening concludes and in Diocles' words: "Thus, Nicarchus, the party came to an end (*peras*)" (164D).

The sympotic form fosters competition and display of knowledge and the men interact agonistically, "one sage always [seeking] ... to outdo the others" (Martin (1993) 120), offering various responses to questions that Neiloxenus brings from the Egyptian king Amasis, with each one topping the next. Every so often the language of the *Sages* echoes that of *Table Talk*. Periander directs the conversation when a pause occurs (*genomenes de siopes*, 150F), encouraging Neiloxenus to contribute. When the young man presents them with the hybrid creature that is half-man and half-horse, Thales gazes at it and smiles (*meidiasas*), recalling moments in *Table Talk* when older philosophers smiled at younger men's conversational sallies (e.g. Ammonius *epimeidiasas* at 9.14, 744B). Periander has already catered to his guests' tastes like a true symposiarch, ensuring the dining arrangements are less lavish than was his custom (150CD).

But as this last gesture of subterfuge indicates, the atmosphere at this banquet is unlike the genial environment of the *Table Talk*. A hint of Lucianic chaos runs through the evening, a sense of potential disorder and incivility. Sporadic bouts of laughter from guests, and Periander's own explosive responses, imbue the dialogue with a sense of tension. Jazdzewska counts twelve instances of laughter and five of smiling in the *Sages* and cites Wilamowitz's complaint about these expressions of hilarity: "Nichts ist bezeichnender, als dass Plutarch seine Personen lachen und immer wieder lachen läßt, offenbar weil er zeigen will, wie witzig sie ihre Reden finden ... Dem Leser kommt das freilich schliesslich recht albern vor" (Wilamowitz-Möllerndorff (1890) 196; quoted in Jazdzewska (forthcoming)). ("Nothing is more significant than that Plutarch and his characters laugh again and again, apparently because he wants to show how funny they find their speeches ... The reader will of course find it quite silly.")

There is scope, however, for a more meaningful reading. It is notable that the guests rarely laugh together in a spontaneous convivial response. "[L]aughter's function seems to be to mitigate the antagonistic potential of the sympotic bantering" (Jazdzewska (forthcoming)). More than that, Periander's own behavior may be seen as symptomatic of strain rather than amusement. As Jazdzewska rather brilliantly puts it: "In the case of Periander ... laughter-episodes belong to Plutarch's ethopoietic strategy; Plutarch uses them to characterize Periander as a man of emotional instability and volatility, in a state of emotional confusion, which as Plutarch says in other texts (*On the Control of Anger* or *On Tranquillity of Mind*), is a symptom of a soul's sickness" (Jazdzewska (forthcoming)). The individuated, isolated incidents of laughter at this banquet are an expression merely of unease.

In another upending of norms we are told that Periander's worship of Aphrodite is an unusual act for him. Deocles explains why the banquet takes place near her shrine: "For

Periander, ever since his mother's love affair had led to her self-destruction, had offered no sacrifice to Aphrodite, but now for the first time, owing to certain dreams of Melissa's, he had set about honouring and conciliating the goddess" (146D). The presence of love is nothing unusual in itself. Plato's and Xenophon's *Symposia* are charged with references to homosexual *eros* and "Love, especially homosexual love, is a key theme of all *symposion* literature, from the songs of Anacreon to Plato's *Symposium*" (Mossman (1997) 126; see Mossman *passim* for a discussion of love in the text). In contrast, though, this symposium substitutes dysfunctional heterosexual themes. Periander's initial attempt to placate Aphrodite hints at a tale, recounted in Diogenes Laertius, that his mother fell in love with him and they committed incest (Diog. Laert. 1.96). His acts of murder and necrophilia relating to his wife are not referred to here, but readers would have been aware of them from Herodotus 3.50 and 5.92 (Mossman (1997) 126) – the text inevitably exploits its sophisticated "readers' knowledge of the *Histories*" (Kim (2009) 484). As if to emphasize the unhappy potential in male–female coupling, a later anecdote, recounted by Solon, tells how Hesiod perished through a misunderstanding relating to a girl (162D). Toward the text's end again, Chersias mentions a precept which has "kept many from marrying, and may from trusting, and some even from speaking, and this is it: 'Give a pledge, and mischief attends.'"

There is much of interest in the sages' discussion of democracy with a tyrant and much that is awkward about it. In structural terms, the dialogue is imbalanced, with "rapid, sententious opinions" followed by more flowing conversation (Kim (2009) 482). The inclusion of other voices gradually loosens up the format: in the second half, Menephilus talks of sex and drinking (156C); Solon expounds about sleep, death, Egyptian customs, and food (159B–160C); and Gorgus tells of Arion's wondrous rescue by dolphins (160F–162B). But for Kim, the *Seven Sages* ends with a question for the reader, as to whether the gnomic assertions of sages are as appropriate for philosophical discourse as the more expansive conversational mode that Plutarch's characters adopt elsewhere, and he concludes, "I suspect that many readers would agree that ... the archaic mode leaves something to be desired" (493).

At the start of *Table Talk* the Plutarchan speaker complained that the men of his era were not as philosophical as the figures that frequent Platonic dialogue (613D). Yet this collection of wise men (none of whom is a Platonic philosopher) lacks the bonds of friendship and the supervision of a good symposiarch that are so omnipresent in *Table Talk*. The gathering of sages makes for a purely performative conversation; and the diverse issues that it evokes, about knowledge, power, and sympotic behavior, seem not to be entirely resolved. The problem may be that "the concept of autocratic rule in general was closely connected with the idea of illegitimacy ... personal abuse and contempt for the law of the city" (Leão (2009) 512). Periander's tyrannical brand of wisdom has a destabilizing effect. The sages' repeated references to the superiority of democratic rule undermine his benevolent status as symposiarch, as does the readers' awareness of what Periander will go on to do.

* * *

Plutarch's sympotic works are experiments in form: his *Table Talk* is the earliest extant text to fuse the Platonic–Xenophontic symposium with encyclopedic content, while his *Seven Sages* makes the symposium a stage for the display and discussion of earlier Greek

wisdom. Each text engages in a unique way with the relationship between philosophy and everyday concerns, and each adds a new dimension to the meaning of the term “symposium.”

NOTE

- 1 All translations are from the Loeb editions, with slight modifications where indicated.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Recent scholarship on Plutarch's *Table Talks* has been of high quality and a number of excellent studies are forthcoming. For a sophisticated analysis of the text see Jason König's essay in Goldhill (2009). König again addresses the question of coherence in the text in a fascinating essay in his co-edited volume, *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (König and Whitmarsh (2007); see König (2007) 43–68).

Two articles by Katerina Oikonomopoulou give insight into the text's scientific and philosophical content: "Peripatetic Encyclopaedism and Plutarch's *Quaestiones Convivales*" (in Klotz and Oikonomopoulou (2011)) and "Plutarch's Corpus of *Quaestiones* in the Tradition of Imperial Greek Encyclopaedism" (in König and Woolf (2013)).

Karin Schlapbach's "Dance and Discourse in Plutarch's *Table Talks* 9.15" (Schlapbach (2011)) provides a detailed study of the final question of *Table Talks*, making dance a lens through which to explore the text's relationship with sympotic tradition.

CHAPTER 15

Animals in Plutarch

Stephen T. Newmyer

Until rather recently, the animal treatises of Plutarch had been the step-children of his *Moralia*, a group of works either disparaged by critics as superficial and derivative or ignored altogether. Although earlier scholars had often acknowledged in Plutarch a sympathy and affection for animalkind not common in the writers of classical antiquity (d'Agostino (1933) 30; Barrow (1967) 112; Babut (1969) 54), some later critics have drawn attention to the relative neglect that his treatises on animals have encountered in scholarly literature (Indelli (1992) 317; Becchi (1993) 60; Inglese and Santese (1999) 7). In the opinion of some, this fate was not unmerited. More than a century ago, Adolf Dyroff, author of one of the earliest comprehensive studies of Plutarch's animal psychology, concluded that his work was replete with mistakes occasioned both by his misunderstanding of the fine distinctions in terminology encountered in Aristotelian and Stoic analyses of the intellectual faculties of animals and by his inability to evaluate critically the evidence that he cites in defense of his own positions (Dyroff (1897) 40, 56). Max Schuster, another early student of Plutarch's writings on animals, maintained that his principal treatise on the subject, *De sollertia animalium* (*On the Cleverness of Animals*), was more valuable for the information it provides on Plutarch's activities as a schoolmaster than for its contribution to an understanding of Plutarch as animal psychologist (Schuster (1917) 1–4).

In the past two decades, scholars have begun to take a second look at Plutarch's writings on animals, and have come to see in them lines of thought previously overlooked. It has become clear to students of Plutarch's animal treatises that to dismiss him as a failed Aristotle is to misunderstand the intention of his animal philosophy, since he approaches the question of what constitutes animality and what distinguishes it from humanity not as a biologist but as a moralist. In each of his formal treatises on animals, as well as in a number of other works included in the *Moralia*, Plutarch endeavors to

establish whether human beings stand in an ethical relationship with non-human animals that compels humans, because of some qualities inherent in animal species, to take into account the interests of non-humans in their interactions with them. Plutarch answers this question in the affirmative, and the thought process by which he reaches this conclusion makes him virtually unique in the history of Greco-Roman speculation on the nature of animalkind. He maintains that non-human animals have at least a share of reason, and that this intellectual kinship between species has profound implications for human beings. The present study examines Plutarch's case for rationality in animals and explores the consequences for human conduct that, in Plutarch's view, arise from this hypothesis.

1. Plutarch's Writings on Animals: Characteristics and Challenges

Plutarch has the distinction of being one of only a few extant ancient authors who devoted entire treatises to issues relating to animals. The longest and most elaborately argued of these is the dialogue known by the Latin title *De sollertia animalium* (*On the Cleverness of Animals*), a designation that hardly does justice to the content of this remarkable work. Ostensibly a debate on the question of whether land-dwelling or sea-dwelling animals are more "clever," the treatise in fact offers a defense of the position that *all* animals have a share of reason (*De soll. an.* 960A). The somewhat artificial and unilluminating division of animal species into land- and sea-dwelling hints at the likelihood that Plutarch's intent in the treatise lay elsewhere than in strict comparison of lifestyles, particularly in light of the fact that no conclusion is reached on the issue. Plutarch is more interested in arguing that all animals are sufficiently armed with rationality to render them capable of navigating their environments. Lighter in tone is the amusing dialogue known both as *Gryllus* ("Oinker," "Squeaker") from the name of the main character, a crewman of Odysseus converted into a pig by the witch Circe, and as *Bruta animalia ratione uti* (*Whether Beasts Are Rational*). In this parody of an episode in Homer (*Od.* 10.203–574), Gryllus explains that, having experienced life both as a man and as an animal, he has no desire to be reconverted into human form since he realizes that animals live more in accord with nature (*kata physin*) than do humans (Bréchet (2005) 43–61). The third of Plutarch's treatises devoted entirely to animals is the defense of vegetarianism known as *De esu carniū* (*On the Eating of Flesh*), which argues for this regimen on hygienic, medical, and ethical grounds. The treatise, in two parts, survives in a mutilated state.

Animals are discussed in some detail as well in a number of Plutarchan treatises that are not devoted primarily to the topic of animals. The most important of these discussions is found in *De amore prolis* (*On the Love of Offspring*), in which Plutarch argues that animals love their offspring as intensely as do human beings and, because their limited mental powers do not allow them to devise the sorts of excesses that humans invent, with their superior mental endowments, animals live more in accord with nature (*kata physin*). Plutarch's symposiac writings naturally touch upon issues relating to animals when they discuss human dietary choices. In the *Convivium septem sapientium* (*Banquet of the Seven Sages*), the wise man Solon laments that the human need for nourishment forces men to act unjustly by taking a life, animal or plant, in order to sustain their own lives, and he maintains that a diet of meat weighs down the human soul and renders it gross

(*Conv. sept. sap.* 159B–C). Similar points are made in the *Quaestionum convivalium* (*Table Talk*) (669D, 729E–730A) and in *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* (*Precepts for Maintaining Health*) (131F–132A).

Plutarch's treatises on animals pose a number of problems for the investigator. In common with other ancient writers on animals who were not biologists, Plutarch tends at times toward excessive anthropomorphization, judging behaviors in animals that resemble human behaviors to be identical with them, a fault which Dyroff had isolated long ago (Dyroff (1897) 46–47). Again like many ancient writers on scientific subjects, he seldom shows evidence of experimentation or personal observation of the phenomena that he discusses, and scholars have suspected that he relied on commonplace books since his examples often parallel those encountered in other ancient sources (Dickerman (1911) 130; Newmyer (2006) 8).

An especially vexing problem is Plutarch's apparent penchant for self-contradiction. While he condemns the eating of meat in *De esu carnum*, he seems to countenance it at *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* 132A, on the grounds that the practice is so firmly established that it is vain to attempt to obliterate it, although he urges his readers at least to supplement their diet by non-meat items. Similarly, the superiority of the animal estate to human life that is argued so forcefully in the *Gryllus* is found nowhere else in Plutarch's writings on animals (Indelli (1995) 9). A self-contradiction of particular relevance to the present study is Plutarch's apparent denial of rationality to animals both at *De fortuna* (*On Fortune*) 98C and at *De fraterno amore* (*On Brotherly Love*) 478E, in which passages he maintains that humans are superior to animals because they can reason. Scholars who have tackled this problem in recent years have concluded that the incoherence in Plutarch's position is more apparent than real and attributable to the nature of the two treatises in question. In both, Plutarch censures humans for not reaching their potential as rational beings and for living in consequence no better than animals. His intention is not to denigrate the intellectual capacities of animals, but to show humans, whose intellectual faculties are by nature superior, how far they have fallen. As always in Plutarch, animals are said to live in accord with nature (*kata physin*) and thereby to make better use of such mental capacities as they have. What seems to be self-contradiction is in fact a difference in emphasis and context (Inglese and Santese (1999) 59–61; Billault (2005) 41).

2. Ancient Perceptions of Animals

An important catalyst toward a reexamination of classical thought on animals, including the works of Plutarch, came with the publication in 1993 of philosopher Richard Sorabji's seminal volume, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: The Origins of the Western Debate*. Sorabji argues that a crisis arose in Greek philosophy when Aristotle denied reason to non-human animals since, if animals are devoid of reason (*logos*) and at the same time of belief (*doxa*), it becomes necessary to compensate for these shortcomings by attributing to them other mental capacities that will enable them to live successfully. He demonstrates further that the Stoics subsequently picked up on Aristotle's denial of reason to animals and lent it an ethical dimension, leading them to claim that humans have no obligations toward non-rational species that have no natural kinship with human beings (Sorabji (1993) 7–28, 107–133).

Although the contributions of Aristotle and the Stoics may have been pivotal to the development of subsequent Western thought on animals, they were not the first Greek philosophers who speculated on the nature of animalkind. Earlier Greek thinkers appear not to have posited the sort of intellectual disjunction between human beings and other animal species that is central to the position of both Aristotle and the Stoics. The fundamental pursuit of pre-Socratic philosophers was the isolation of those elements that constitute the *kosmos* and its creatures. As early as the sixth century BCE, these thinkers sought to identify communality in life-forms and they were consequently more willing to countenance the belief that humans and animals shared features including soul, sensation, and even certain mental capacities (Frenzel (2001) 69–88; Newmyer (2007) 157–158). At the same time, the idea that humans and animals stand in some sort of ethical relationship may have appeared in the thought of some Presocratics. The doctrine of metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls, widely associated with Pythagoras (sixth century BCE), would seem by its nature to entail sympathy to animals since adherents of the doctrine were enjoined to pursue a vegetarian regimen lest they consume human souls that had passed into animals. One may suspect here more anthropocentric concern for human spiritual purity than sympathy for animals, and not all ancient sources agree in any case on the specifics of Pythagorean teachings, but Pythagoreanism has generally been interpreted as an early pro-animal philosophical stance in Greek thought (Haussleiter (1935) 97–157; Dierauer (1977) 18–24; Dombrowski (1984) 35–56; Tsekourakis (1987) 370–379).

In time, however, the tenets of Aristotelian zoology found wide acceptance, and the eventual incorporation of Stoic doctrine into Christian ethics ensured the long-term survival in Western thought of a rigorously anthropocentric belief that animals are different from and inferior to human beings because of their severely limited mental endowments (Sorabji (1993) 195–198, 204–205). In this climate, speculation on potential intellectual and ethical kinship between animal species that may be detected in the fragments of the Presocratics, as well as in Aristotle's follower Theophrastus (c. 372–287 BCE) and in Plutarch himself, exercised little practical influence. There is scant evidence that their arguments led to any real betterment in the welfare of animals in Greco-Roman society, whether in the arena, on the farm, or in the courts of law (Bodson (1983) 314; Newmyer (2007) 151).

3. Plutarch on Rationality in Animals

Plutarch's case for the presence of reason in non-human animals receives its most extensive and coherent exposition in the first seven chapters of *De sollertia animalium* (959A–965D), and is to a significant degree intended as a refutation of the Stoic denial of reason to animals and of the negative consequences for human–animal relations which such a denial entails (Babut (1969) 54; Becchi (2000) 207–208; Becchi (2001) 123–124; Newmyer (1992) 44–48). In this dialogue, the interlocutor Autobulus reminds his listeners that in the course of the previous day's discussion, he had advanced the hypothesis that *all* animals “partake of reason and intellect” (*metechlein ... panta ta zōia ... dianoias kai logismou*, 960A). This assertion poses an immediate challenge to the Stoic position that animals are devoid of reason. While Autobulus admits that animals do not possess the fullness of reason, he asserts that it would be perverse to maintain that creatures not

intended by nature to exhibit perfect reason therefore have none at all (962A). As one recent scholar has aptly characterized Plutarch's position, the difference between reason in humans and in other animals is properly viewed as *quantitative* rather than *qualitative* (Becchi (2000) 207).

Earlier in his exposition, Plutarch's Autobulus had countered the implicit denial of reason to non-human animals that is inherent in the Stoic "theory of opposites," which holds that everything in nature has its opposite, by arguing that the correct opposite to rational creatures (in Stoic doctrine, human beings exclusively) is unbesouled creatures (960C–D). Not even the Stoics had denied that animals possess a soul, however inferior it might be to the human soul (Newmyer (2006) 24–26, 34–35). Every creature that is besouled (*empsychon*, 960D) has from birth, Autobulus asserts, the faculties of sensation (*aisthēsis*) and imagination (*phantasia*) (960D). He further cites the Aristotelian philosopher Strato of Lampsacus (third century BCE) as declaring that it is impossible for a creature to possess sensation without having intellect (*to noein*, 961A). Plutarch had earlier alluded approvingly to Aristotle's statement that nature does nothing without a purpose, since it would be purposeless for nature to have endowed animals with sentience without intending them to exercise that sentience toward some end (960E). That capacity enables animals to distinguish between what is useful and what is harmful in their lives and consequently to pursue their prey and evade their predators, which they could not do successfully without the mental faculties of expectation (*prosdokia*), memory (*mnēmē*), intention (*prothesis*), and preparedness (*paraskenē*) (960F). Plutarch finishes off this section of his case for rationality in animals by observing that the Stoics themselves did not hesitate to punish their animals when they performed badly, which would be pointless if animals did not have the mental capacity to understand why they were being punished and to repent of their mistakes (961D).

Plutarch's line of argument here strikes at the very heart of Stoic teaching. For the Stoics, the goal of human life was to live in accord with or in compliance with nature, a doctrine developed already by Zeno, the founder of the school (335–263 BCE), as Diogenes Laertius reports in his life of Zeno (7.87). In one sense at least, Plutarch argues, animals are superior to human beings because, although their level of rationality is inferior to that of humans, they live more fully in accord with their nature because they are not corrupted by the vices to which their superior level of rationality at times leads humans (962C). He would make this same argument in a witty fashion in *Bruta animalia ratione uti*, when he envisions Odysseus' shipmate Gryllus, now a pig, lecturing Odysseus on the superiority of the animal estate, for animals, he notes, mate only to produce offspring, care nothing for riches, and need no fancy foods: for animals, "nature is everything" (*to holon hē physis*, 990D). Gryllus ends his exposition by questioning how he ever allowed "sophists," apparently the Stoics, to convince him that only humans are endowed with reason and intellect (992C).

The cornerstone of the Stoic denial of rationality to non-human animals lay in the school's complex concept of soul (*psychē*). The important Stoic theorist Chrysippus (c. 280–207 BCE) had maintained that the soul of both humans and non-human animals consisted of eight parts: the five senses, the capacities for utterance and for reproduction, and a rather mysterious eighth component termed the *hēgemonikon*, a kind of "governing principle" or "guiding element," which oversees the operation of the soul in its entirety. In humans, this guiding principle advances to a rational state, but in non-human animals

it remains irrational. This incomplete development of the animal soul had enormous practical implications for the Stoics. If animals are to be considered devoid of reason, behaviors in them that appear to imply the operation of reason must be accounted for in some other way. The Stoics attributed these seemingly rational actions to what they termed “impulse” (*hormē*), a property that distinguishes animals from plants but does not serve to raise animals to the level of beings whose actions presuppose forethought and purpose. Impulse allows animals to flee their enemies and pursue their prey but not to make conscious choices or to exercise will (Sorabji (1993) 114). Most importantly, however, since human beings grow into rationality as their *hēgemonikon* matures, humans and animals over time become increasingly alienated, which prevents humans from sharing with non-humans that sense of kinship, attraction, and belonging which the Stoics termed *oikeiōsis* (Dirlmeier (1937) 1–100; Pembroke (1971) 114–119; Striker (1983) 143–167; Caballero (1999) 549–566; Reydam-Schils (2002) 221–251). All animals can by nature distinguish that which is their own (*to oikeion*) from that which is foreign (*to allotrion*) to them, but in the case of rational humans, this sense of kinship contributes to the birth of justice as human beings seek to respect that which belongs to others and to guard that which is their own.

Although Plutarch had acknowledged that animals are incapable of attaining to the fullness of reason to which education and practice can lead humans (*De soll. an.* 962C), his arguments for the presence of some degree of reason in all animal species demanded that the Stoic denial of interspecies *oikeiōsis* be rejected and that a number of closely inter-related consequences of human–animal kinship be considered: If animals are rational, their vocalizations may constitute genuine language. If they are rational, they may have some interest in staying alive and in escaping misuse at the hands of human beings. Finally, if animals are rational, it may be wrong for humans to use them as a source of food.

It was a task of fundamental importance to Plutarch to refute the Stoic assertion that animals are devoid of meaningful language since, if the vocalizations of animals are after all significant, a central tenet of the Stoic case against the possibility of an ethical relationship between species collapses inasmuch as language was, in Stoic doctrine, a product of reason and a prerequisite for moral standing. The Stoics distinguished between two forms of reason: *logos endiathetos*, a sort of “internal reason” or “thought,” controls and ultimately gives outward expression to *logos prophorikos*, “outward reason” or “meaningful speech” (Sorabji (1993) 80; Newmyer (1999) 103). Since, in Stoic teaching, the *hēgemonikon* or “governing principle” of the animal soul remains irrational and since the capacity for utterance is controlled by this element of the soul, animal vocalizations are not prompted by the action of reason and are therefore meaningless. Plutarch offered an intriguing argument to counter this assertion. He recounts (*De soll. an.* 973C–E) that a certain jay living at Rome listened to the sounds of trumpets from a passing funeral procession and then fell silent for some time. Eventually it repeated only the notes of the trumpets, in exact order, and refused to give voice to the other sounds it had been wont to mimic, which leads Plutarch to conclude that the bird was meditating upon the trumpet music and consciously chose, by a process of self-instruction, to reproduce only specific sounds. Hence, he concludes, internal reason (*logos endiathetos*) gave rise to meaningful external expression (*logos prophorikos*). Slightly earlier in his discussion of birds that “learn to speak” (*manthanontes dialegesthai*, 972F), Plutarch had placed a similarly generous construction on the meaning of animal utterances,

declaring that starlings and crows serve as advocates and supporters of other animals in their endeavors to learn, since the birds prove to their animal colleagues that they are endowed with both “uttered speech” (*logou prophorikou*, 973A) and “articulate speech” (*phōnēs enarthrou*, 973A). The problem with animal language may therefore lie not with the animals themselves, but with humans who have not yet mastered their language, a circumstance which Plutarch would argue, in *De esu carniū*, his defense of vegetarianism, has devastating consequences for the lives of animals.

The question of whether humans can stand in any relationship with non-human animals that might be termed “justice” (*dikē, dikaiosynē*), and what might constitute that relationship, is the subject of one of the earliest pronouncements on human–animal relations in extant Greek literature. Around 700 BCE, the poet Hesiod observed (*Op.* 276–280) that Zeus had endowed humans with a sense of justice but had withheld this from animals, as is evident, Hesiod maintains, from the fact that animals eat each other. Hesiod does not elaborate on his assertion, but ideas that would in time become widely held assumptions in classical thought on human–animal relations, and fundamental tenets in Stoic teaching on animals, may lurk behind his verses, not least the notions that humans can owe nothing to animals because they are so alien to them in lifestyle and behavior, and that humans have a right to defend themselves from their attacks and to use them as they see fit. Plutarch’s case for language possession in non-human animals militates against the Stoic refusal to accord justice to animals if moral standing depends, as the Stoics maintained, upon language possession, and specifically upon the ability to comprehend and verbalize a conception of justice. Creatures devoid of language cannot undertake to respect the interests of others or to demand that their interests be respected in turn. One of the goals of Plutarch’s argument for rationality and language possession in non-human animals was to demonstrate that animals meet the criteria for inclusion in the sphere of human moral concern that the Stoics set forth, and that any definition of “justice” (*dikē*), as it operates in interspecies relations, must involve concern for and respect for the interests of other animal species based upon the intellectual kinship that animals share with human beings. Moreover, Plutarch not only demands that humans extend justice to other animal species, but he even argues that animals understand the meaning of “justice” and both practice it in their own lives and demand it from human beings.

In his life of the Stoic theorist Chrysippus, Diogenes Laertius noted (7.129) that Chrysippus had asserted that there is no question of a relationship of justice between humans and other animals because of their “unlikeness” (*anomoiotēta*) to humans, an obvious allusion to the Stoic doctrine of *oikeiōsis*. Only humans, in Stoic theory, can give their free assent to choices and can therefore choose to respect the interests of other humans. Plutarch countered this assertion by arguing (*De soll. an.* 964C–D) that the Stoics were in no position to make such a statement since they do not anywhere adequately account for the *birth* of the concept of justice and do not even recognize, as did the philosophers Empedocles (c. 492–432 BCE) and Heraclitus (c. 500 BCE), that humans are from conception guilty of injustice since an embryo nourishes itself “unnaturally” (*para physin*, 964E) by feeding off the limbs of its parents. For Plutarch, a sense of justice is born naturally in animals in the very affection that they show toward their own offspring, a point which he had made in his treatise *De amore prolis* (493C–495E). Since affection for offspring arises from a recognition of kinship, and since kinship is the origin of justice, one cannot deny, Plutarch maintains, that animals are the sort of beings

that are capable of practicing justice, even if in a limited degree, in keeping with their inferior level of rationality (Newmyer (2006) 60–62).

The sorts of evidence that Plutarch cites in defense of the position that animals practice justice toward human beings, and expect it in return from humans, are largely anecdotal and have been branded excessively anthropomorphizing by critics who feel Plutarch makes unwarranted analogies between human behaviors and animal behaviors that appear identical (Dyroff (1897) 48). While it would be difficult to refute this criticism, it is worth noting that Plutarch is one of very few extant writers on animals who are willing to entertain the possibility that animals live by some code of justice (Newmyer (1997) 86–87). On this matter as well, his argument seems to be directed against the Stoics. He ascribes to them the belief that human beings can have no debt of justice to creatures that have themselves no conception of “acting justly” (*to dikaiopragein*) (*De soll. an.* 964B) toward human beings. To counter this assertion, Plutarch more than once recounts the often-repeated anecdote of the singer Arion who was rescued at sea by a school of dolphins, a species of animal to which he attributes “an affection toward humans” (*to philanthrōpon*, *De soll. an.* 984C). In his most extensive version of the anecdote (*Conv. sept. sap.* 161A–D), Plutarch speculates that the dolphins worked as a team to save the drowning singer because they reckoned it “a duty necessary and incumbent upon them all” (*anan-kaion ... leitourgēma kai prosēkon pāsīn*, 161D; see Newmyer (2009)). In a similar anecdote, he recounts that a dolphin that had allowed a youth to ride upon its back had accidentally caused him to fall off in the course of a storm and drown, after which the animal beached itself and lay beside the dead youth until it too had died, having “considered it just” (*dikaiōsas*, *De soll. an.* 984D) to share in the death for which it was partially responsible.

Plutarch believed as well that animals expect to be treated justly by human beings. He recounts an anecdote (*De soll. an.* 968E) according to which an elephant living in Rome that has been mistreated by boys who pricked its trunk with their writing styluses hoisted one boy into the air and, to the horror of onlookers, seemed to be about to cast him to the ground. At that moment, however, the elephant put the boy down gently, “judging it justice enough that a person of that age was made afraid” (*arkousan ēgoumenos dikēn tōi tēlikoutōi phobēthēnai*, 968E). By far the most extraordinary evidence of Plutarch’s conviction that animals demand just treatment from human beings is found in his defense of vegetarianism, *De esu carniūm*, in a passage rendered all the more significant by its overt linkage of his beliefs that animals have an understanding of justice and that they possess articulate language which they use to solicit justice from their human tormentors. At the moment of slaughter, animals are said to utter “cries for justice” (*dikaiologias*, 994E), which human beings mistakenly think are merely “inarticulate sounds” (*phōnās anarthrous*, 968E).

The above passage from Plutarch’s treatise on vegetarianism may provide some insight on one of the more controversial questions relating to his philosophy on animals, namely, on what grounds he advocated abstention from meat eating. Vegetarian thought in classical antiquity has been exhaustively studied in general histories of the phenomenon by scholars who have isolated religious, medical, hygienic, and ethical grounds for the practice in ancient times (Haussleiter (1935); Dombrowski (1984)). Since Plutarch is the only ancient writer besides the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (c. 234–305 CE) from whom treatises devoted entirely to vegetarianism have survived relatively intact, he naturally receives considerable attention in such scholarship. In addition to these general histories, Plutarch’s vegetarian philosophy has been the subject as well of a number of

specialized studies (Tsekourakis (1987) 366–393; Newmyer (1995) 41–43; Jufresa (1996) 219–226; Inglese and Santese (1999) 7–89; Newmyer (2006) 85–102). Little agreement on what led Plutarch to support a meatless regimen can be traced in this body of literature. Haussleiter maintained that Plutarch's attraction to the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis ultimately inspired his attack on the consumption of meat (Haussleiter (1935) 228), but in fact Plutarch seldom mentions Pythagoras, and in the opening sentence of his treatise *On the Eating of Flesh*, he dismisses the question of what led Pythagoras to advocate abstention as irrelevant (993A). Tsekourakis has argued that, while Plutarch does show marked sympathy for the sufferings of animals, it was his concern with human health and proper hygiene, influenced by his study of Greek medical literature, that was of primary importance in the formulation of his opposition to meat eating (Tsekourakis (1987) 386–391). Jufresa discounts Pythagoreanism as an inspiration for Plutarch, but agrees with Tsekourakis that hygienic considerations weighed heavily with him (Jufresa (1996) 220–222). Plutarch's portrait of animals at the point of slaughter voicing their demand for just consideration from their slayers suggests that the ethical dimension of Plutarch's case for abstention should not be underestimated.

In a very real sense, the vignette of animals at slaughter marks the culmination of Plutarch's argument for the presence of some degree of rationality in all animals, for it demonstrates the practical consequences, for human and non-human animals, of intellectual kinship between species. Not only must a relationship of justice obtain between species, but the modicum of sentience that Plutarch had argued was a natural component of rationality (*De soll. an.* 960E) allows animals in danger to appreciate their situation and to seek to avoid harm. In Plutarch's estimation, it is ethically unacceptable for human beings to ignore the pleas of their intellectual kindred, making a vegetarian lifestyle incumbent on ethically enlightened persons. In addition, however, to Plutarch's assertion that animals deserve to be spared because of qualities inherent in them, the ethical dimension of his case for abstention relies as well on appeals to the better nature of human beings themselves. While ancient literature is replete with horrifying descriptions of cruelty to animals, one seldom encounters the view that such cruelty is inherently wrong. Indeed, such cruelty was even taken as evidence of the superiority of rational human beings over irrational beasts (Shelton (2007) 116, 119). Here too Plutarch provides a refreshing exception to the rule. He makes the arresting point that one can hardly justify the consumption of meat on the grounds that humans are acting out of self-defense since only harmless and tame species are eaten by humans (*De esu carn.* 994B). Nor can humans justify the slaughter of animals to provide themselves with variety and interest in food choices since nature has provided her gifts in such abundance that humans can live satisfying lives without resorting to cruelty to animals (*De esu carn.* 994A). Not only do humans who consume meat act with ingratitude toward the gods, but they necessarily violate the life of moderation and self-control that is proper to man.

4. Plutarch on Animals: Appraisal and Survival

The above examination of Plutarch's case for rationality in animals, and of the principal consequences for human conduct that such a position entails, invites two questions, one backward-glancing and one forward-looking: Where does Plutarch stand in the tradition of

classical speculation on animals, and what future life did his ideas experience? Plutarch's most significant contribution to the ancient dialogue on the nature of animalkind was his championing of the idea that animals are to some degree rational and that that rationality manifests itself in the successful execution of those activities that are essential to their lives, including avoidance of enemies and capture of prey, solicitous care for their offspring, and mastery of new and useful skills. In so arguing, Plutarch set himself against a formidable array of previous thinkers that included Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. If he at times relied too heavily on analogies with human behaviors and on a style of argument that proved its point by showing the absurdity of the opposite position, he at least did not reject common sense in the evaluation of evidence. Nor did he consider a tender heart incompatible with philosophical analysis. It is small wonder that Plutarch expressed horror at the squeals of animals being led to slaughter. Sorabji observes that Plutarch's idea that humans owe a debt of benevolence to animals is unique to him in all of ancient thought on animals (Sorabji (1993) 125).

While it would perhaps be an exaggeration to speak of Plutarch's "influence" upon subsequent ancient discussion on animals because of the wide acceptance of the tenets of Aristotelian zoology in the Western intellectual tradition, his concern for animals as suffering creatures certainly inspired the Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry to turn to him in the composition of his extensive and wide-ranging defense of vegetarianism, *De abstinentia* (*On Abstinence*). In chapters twenty through twenty-four of the third book of his treatise, which offer an extended and multifaceted argument for an obligation of justice toward non-human species, Porphyry incorporated, sometimes with only minimal verbal alterations, lengthy passages from *On the Cleverness of Animals* 959E–963F. He had accepted Plutarch's arguments that animals demonstrate both "internal reason" or "thought" (*logos endiathetos*) and "external reason," or "language" (*logos prophorikos*), in consequence of which they have articulate language that humans cannot comprehend (*Abst.* 3.3.1–6), but he greatly expanded Plutarch's view that animals stand in a relation of justice toward human beings because of their shared mental endowments by adding a spiritual dimension to the argument that is notably absent from Plutarch's work. In Porphyry's view, kindness to animals, our intellectual kin, brings humans closer to the gods who are, like humans and animals, rational beings. Honoring god's creatures brings men closer to divinity because kindness to animals pleases the gods.

Porphyry, much more so than Plutarch, stressed the Pythagorean origin of an injunction to treat animals with kindness (*Abst.* 3.20.7), so that his case for benevolence toward other species carries some of that preoccupation with human spiritual purity that appears to lie behind Pythagoras' call for such benevolence (Clark (2000) 15–19; Newmyer (2006) 97–98). Plutarch, in contrast, rests his case overwhelmingly on the belief that kindness to animals is incumbent upon humans solely because of their intellectual kinship with human beings, without regard for spiritual advantages that might accrue to humans from such kindness.

In recent decades, Plutarch's writings on animals have ceased to be judged as a mere patchwork of ideas culled from previous thinkers more subtle and incisive than he. It has become clear that his contribution to the debate on the nature of animalkind *vis-à-vis* humankind lies in his insistence that humans and animals are joined by an ethical bond forged by common mental experience. As biologists increasingly acknowledge that the potential ethical dimensions of interspecies encounters merit study, Plutarch will take his place as classical antiquity's most important advocate of this position.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A number of works may be recommended for readers interested in further study of Plutarch's animal philosophy. His three principal treatises on animals are translated into English, with extensive explanatory notes, in Cherniss and Helmbold (1984). The volume edited by Kalof (2007), although not dedicated exclusively to classical antiquity, has chapters, with up-to-date bibliographies, on animals in ancient societies from 2500 BCE through 1000 CE employed as symbols, as prey of hunters, as tools for science, as objects for philosophical speculation, as sources of entertainment, and as subjects for artists. Two recent volumes deal exclusively with Plutarch on animals. The essays in the work edited by Boulogne (2005), authored by prominent Plutarchists, offer discussion of various aspects of the three principal animal treatises as well as of other works of Plutarch that have occasion to mention animals. Newmyer (2006) provides a detailed overview of Plutarch's views on animals as rational creatures, as beings capable of feeling pain and joy, as altruistic and cooperative creatures, and as food sources, with particular emphasis on Plutarch as a precursor of arguments encountered in modern animal rights literature and in current scientific discourse.

CHAPTER 16

Plutarch the Antiquarian

Pascal Payen

In considering Plutarch's status as an antiquarian one may ask whether his immense knowledge, erudition, and passionate curiosity for the past make him a lover of all things ancient, an antiquarian in the manner of Varro and Pausanias or the Renaissance savants who rediscovered classical antiquarianism, such as Biondo, Scaliger, or Justus Lipsius. Oddly enough, Arnaldo Momigliano does not include Plutarch in his study of the antiquarian tradition (Momigliano (1950/1983)). It is true that neither Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* nor many of his moral essays and dialogues fall into the category of antiquarian works. And yet, it seems evident that antiquarian knowledge is integral to Plutarch's way of thinking and writing, that it informs his works in an entirely original manner. Consequently, in order to understand fully the specificity of Plutarch's antiquarianism, we must consider how the moderns construed this notion (Di Donato (2007); Herklotz (2007)) when they appropriated the heritage of their ancient counterparts, and then consider the works of Plutarch himself.

1. What is an Antiquarian? Ancients and Moderns

The term *antiquarius* is used in the sixteenth century to refer to one who gathers, studies, and publishes all manner of artifacts which attest to the origins, customs, and rituals of the ancient world. Flavio Biondo (1392–1463) was one of the first scholars, after Petrarch, to engage in this type of intellectual pursuit, which was widely practiced during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A lover of architecture, topography, archaeology, and epigraphy, Biondo was meticulous in gathering and classifying Roman *antiquitates* (Momigliano (1983) 252, 286–287). Those who followed him belonged to the larger European movement of humanist erudition, exemplified in particular by the works of

Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540–1609) on ancient chronologies, Justus Lipsius (1547–1606) on numismatics, and Isaac Casaubon's (1559–1614) annotations of the works of Strabo and Polybius. The goal of these humanists, however, was not to offer a new historical narrative of ancient times since the ancients themselves had already done so to perfection, as evinced by the works of Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, and the *Historia Augusta*. Claude Peiresc's (1580–1637) immense correspondence, and the account of Jacob Spon (1647–1685), published in 1678, of his travels to Italy, Greece, Constantinople, Dalmatia, and the Levant both attest to the fact that erudition was thriving and in good standing among a community of scholars that spanned from Amsterdam to Venice, Zurich to London, and from Paris and Lyon to Geneva. Moreover, mid-seventeenth-century antiquarians, who were just as indifferent to history as they were interested in the past, nonetheless occasioned important innovations in contemporary historical methods, especially concerning the study of primary sources such as charts, literary texts, inscriptions, and coins. For instance, Jean Mabillon (1632–1707) established reliable criteria for determining the authenticity of a document in his *De re diplomatica* (1681), which Bernard de Montfaucon (1655–1741) later applied to Greek texts in his *Paleographia graeca* (1708). Montfaucon was also the first to compile a comprehensive study of ancient Greco-Roman times, in his fifteen in-folio volumes *Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* (*Antiquity Explained and Represented in Sculptures*) (1719–1724) (Kriegel (1988) 221–264).

And yet, it is interesting to note that the relationship between antiquarian erudition and the fields of history and philosophy became increasingly strained between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, because we find a similar tension within the context of Plutarch's works. Antiquarians were criticized for organizing their work in terms of subject-matter, showing no regard for chronology, historical context, or how their subject may have evolved over time. They were also faulted for compiling their data on a given topic regardless of its importance and whether or not it could help resolve a given question or problem. In the "Preliminary Discourse" to the *Encyclopedia* (1751), d'Alembert condemns erudition and those disciplines which call upon it – such as law, philology, and antiquarianism – because, in his opinion, they rely on memory rather than reason and the advancements achieved through it (Grell (1993) 20, 29–38; (1995) 123–125). The French journalist and lawyer Linguet (1736–1794), who was exiled to London in 1777, captures the general opinion of his times in his *Histoire du siècle d'Alexandre* (1769): "Compilers and antiquarians are the most prolific writers, second only to theologians [...]. For them, antiquity is a fertile field where they can harvest, at great effort, a few truths and many lies" (Grell (1993) 19). The debate between antiquarians and philosophers was most pronounced during the Enlightenment. In line with Voltaire and Condorcet, philosophers valorized the empirical use of reason in order to improve human existence. At the same time, they readily turned to works of erudition and frequently did so without acknowledging these works.

At this point we might ask whether Plutarch is representative of the "philological-antiquarian" tradition. Some of the forms of discourse Plutarch uses, such as *apophthegmata*, *problēmata*, *aitia*, and *sumposiaka*, as well as his choice of sources, bear an undeniable similarity to the long-standing admiration for erudition that traverses all of Greek and Latin literature. However, in order to appreciate fully Plutarch's originality as an antiquarian, it is necessary to consider first the principal phases of this Greco-Roman tradition.

Fragments from Hecataeus' *Periegesis* (*FGrH* I F 37–357) indicate that the first Ionian geographers from the sixth century BCE had already compiled lists of peoples and their

customs, following the same methodology that Herodotus would use during the years 445–425. At the end of the fifth century, the sophist Hippias tells Socrates that in his teachings he addresses heroic and divine genealogies, foundational narratives, and “in general everything pertaining to antiquity” (*pasés tēs arkhaiologias*) (Pl. *Hp. mai.* 285d). The 178 strange or extraordinary facts and legends gathered in the *De Mirabilibus* (*Peri thaumasiōn akousmatōn*), generally attributed to Aristotle, demonstrate a similar kind of encyclopedic erudition. The *Atthis*, a history of Attica which Thucydides attributes to Hellanicus (1.97.2), shows that historians from that region had been composing works on the institutions, language, legends, and customs of Attic cities from early on, without structuring their material in terms of chronology or overarching ideas, contrary to later historians such as Thucydides or Polybius. The Hellenistic period gave rise to an abundance of works by “antiquarian” historians and it was from these that Aristotle’s disciples gleaned the substance of the 158 *politeiai* which later formed the basis of his *Politics*. Plutarch used both corpuses as the primary sources for writing his *Lives* from this period as well as his *Greek Questions*. Beginning from the second century BCE, numerous experts on “ancient matters” could be found in Rome, the most important of whom was Varro (116–27), whose works Plutarch knew well and used in composing his *Roman Questions* (Moatti (1997) 97–155). In fact, Plutarch describes Varro as “most deeply versed in history” in his *Life of Romulus* (12.3). Between 56 and 46 BCE, Varro published forty-three volumes of *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* (*Divine and Human Antiquities*), whose title may have given its name to the practice of collecting and studying written documents and material sources. In fact, authors such as Cato the Elder, Valerius Messalla, and Verrius Flaccus, all of whom compiled information on civic traditions as well as religious, grammatical, and legislative customs, were known by Plutarch and his contemporary, Tacitus, as “antiquarians.” In the latter’s *Dialogue on Orators* (37.2), Messalla speaks of “original papers, still extant in the libraries of the curious *antiquarii*,” in reference to the political discourses and letters gathered in copious anthologies, of which he gives an example. Pausanias’ *Periegesis* (c. 140–175) and Athenaeus’ *Banquet of the Sophists* (c. 195–235) follow different conventions since their scope is limited to a single category of documents. While Pausanias addresses only monuments, Athenaeus treats above all dramatic and historical literature.

2. Plutarch’s Antiquarian Erudition

Plutarch belongs to the antiquarian tradition briefly delineated above to the extent that in both the *Lives* and the *Moralia* he shows an interest in preserving a cultural heritage that comprises political, religious, and moral traditions, social customs, and military conduct. It is significant, however, that the heritage Plutarch so carefully assembles is at once Greek and Roman. Given the imperial context in which Plutarch lived, and the fact that he was a citizen of Chaeronea, Delphi, Athens, and Rome, his works contributed to the creation of collective memory by bringing together a maximum number of elements from the Greek and Roman past (Swain (1996) 65–100, 109–113). As an antiquarian, Plutarch is no mere collector, an indifferent onlooker, or dilettante. For him, the past derives its meaning from being confronted with contemporary Imperial Rome. Such is the case, for example, in the *Precepts of Statecraft*, where the advice he gives to the young Menemachus on good governance derives from Greek tradition and advocates a prudent attitude toward contemporary Roman authorities.

It remains to be seen how Plutarch uses his erudition to construct this collective memory. Given that his works contain over ten thousand quotations and allusions, it would be impossible to give a precise answer in the context of this chapter (Helmbold and O'Neil (1959)). The dedicatory letter to Trajan with which Plutarch begins his *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* clearly conveys his desire to preserve the memory of great men through their speeches and discourses. In fact, Plutarch tells us here that “the manners and dispositions of great men [...] are more apparent in their words than in their actions” (172C) and that “such speeches and answers as happened amidst their employments, passions, and events afford us (as in a looking-glass) a clear discovery of each particular temper and disposition” (172D). In composing this collection of “sayings” and his *Sayings of Spartans*, Plutarch drew from his own works, especially the *Lives*. It is very likely that he also consulted collections of “sayings” of famous men such as those probably used by Themistocles (*Them.* 18.1) and Cato the Elder (*Cat. Mai.* 7.2, 8.3). The antiquarian practice of listing famous speeches that Messalla alludes to in reference to Mucianus (*Dial.* 37) is germane to an idea cherished by Plutarch, according to which trivial facts and casual conversation best reveal a man's character (*Alex.* 1.1–3).

Plutarch's wealth of antiquarian erudition, then, is not limited to a few treatises in the *Moralia*, such as the *Sayings*, the Roman and Greek *Questions*, the *Bravery of Women*, or the nine books of *Table Talk* in which Sosius Senecio – to whom the *symposia* are dedicated – and his guests discuss a number of questions. Plutarch's vast knowledge is also manifest in the *Lives*, which, incidentally, are dedicated to the same illustrious statesman. In fact, the *Lives* were themselves a source of and the occasion for Plutarch's antiquarian research. Finally, the seventy-eight treatises of the *Moralia* owe their unity not to Plutarch – as evinced by the Lamprias Catalogue, a list of his treatises found in a library during the third or fourth century – but to incomplete groupings and especially to the Byzantine monk Maximus Planudes (c. 1290–1310) who copied and classified them.

Plutarch's antiquarian erudition is above all of an historical nature. Those of his *Lives* situated in the fifth century, as well as his *Roman Questions*, suggest that Plutarch read all of the historical works from the Classical and Hellenistic periods. For instance, his organization of the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* exhibits a genuine interest in chronology and a conscientious effort to present his subject-matter as exhaustively as possible. In this work, Plutarch turns first to the reign of Persian kings, ranging from Cyrus to Artaxerxes Mnemon, as well as the queens Semiramis and Parysatis; then to the Egyptian, Thracian, and Scythian rulers; the tyrants of Syracuse, from Gelon to Agathocles (and Dion); the Macedonian and Hellenistic kings; Athenian strategists (to which he adds Peisistratus and Demetrius of Phalerum); the Spartans; the Thebans Epaminondas and Pelopidas; and finally, a group of twenty Romans spanning from Manius Curius to Augustus.

Plutarch's antiquarian erudition also comes across in his passion for exploring the origins of ideas and customs, as well as archaic terms, be they Roman or Greek. Varro is his primary source of information for the oldest period of Roman history. The numerous etymologies Plutarch gleans from Varro's treatise *On the Latin Language* attest to the Greek author's curiosity for a language he himself does not master, as well as his desire to make it more accessible to his Greek readers. Plutarch's excursions into linguistic and historical archaisms concern, to mention just a few areas, political institutions (“dictator”: *Marc.* 24.7; “comices”: *Rom.* 19.10; “Quirites”: *Num.* 3.4), Roman religion (“flamines”: *Num.* 7.5; “anciles”: *Num.* 13.5), social customs (emancipation by “vindicta”: *Publ.* 7.5; marriage: *Rom.* 15;

Pomp. 4), and calendric terms of classification (*Num.* 19.3–5). Plutarch's considerations are prompted by the conviction that the Latin language derives from the Greek (*Rom.* 15.4), and when presenting them he borrows not only from Varro, but also from the lexicographer Verrius Flaccus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and the historian king Juba II of Mauritania who had also read Varro (*Sert.* 9.5). The considerable importance Plutarch ascribes to onomastic similarities and derivations is hardly surprising (*Quaest. Rom.* 31, 51, 62, 67, 78; *Quaest. Graec.* 5, 8, 9, 15, 39, 43). Both languages (*utraque lingua*) are the source of a wealth of knowledge which may appear disorderly and fragmentary, but which in fact guarantees a certain continuity between Greece and Rome, between Plutarch's mastery of Greek culture and Roman culture, such that we might say of him what Cicero writes of Varro: "We were wandering about and straying like visitors in our own city, and your books led us, so to speak, right home, and enabled us to realize at last who and where we were" (*Acad.* 1.3.9).

Because mythology addresses the matter of origins and is not entirely unrelated to history, it too constitutes an important component of Plutarch's antiquarian knowledge. In fact, the intersection of the two fields, mythology and history, may well be one of the primary overarching threads of his entire oeuvre. At the beginning of his *Life of Romulus*, for instance, Plutarch presents the various legendary accounts of how Rome acquired its name in such a way that he effectively anchors the city's origins in a Greco-Trojan tradition. Thus, for Plutarch, mythology serves to establish Hellenism as the origin of contemporary civilization (whereas Livy uses it to give an "Italic" version of events in his history of Rome, *Ab urbe condita*). Similarly, Plutarch's use of digressions in relating numerous accounts of the twin births of Remus and Romulus illustrates both his mastery as a writer of myth and his ability to maintain a critical distance from myth, even to historicize it. The remark with which Plutarch begins his *Life of Theseus* would serve just as well to introduce his Greek and Roman *Questions*: "May I therefore succeed in purifying Fable [*to muthôdes*], making her submit to reason [*logos*] and take on the semblance of History. But where she obstinately disdains to make herself credible, and refuses to admit any element of probability, I shall pray for kindly readers, and such as receive with indulgence the tales of antiquity" (*Thes.* 1.3). In both the *Lives* and the *Questions*, Plutarch gathers numerous versions of a given legend which he then makes a pretense of reconciling. Ultimately, though, History must yield to Myth and, like the reader, "receive with indulgence the tales of antiquity." This is because such tales, regardless of their epistemological status, belong to a heritage that must be preserved. Similarly, myth and history overlap in both the ancient and modern antiquarian traditions because they represent a wealth of knowledge about the past, and therefore represent the past itself.

In his treatise entitled *Bravery of Women* (*Mulierum virtutes*), Plutarch presents twenty-seven stories in which he relates legends, deeds, and historical facts honoring "excellent" women invested with the same *arête* as some men. These stories bear a certain similarity to the answers figuring in his *Greek Questions*, for two reasons. First, all take place in the Mediterranean basin and span from mythological times to the second century BCE. Second, Plutarch's *Bravery of Women* addresses much the same themes as those present in his *Greek Questions*, namely, the foundation of cities (3, 7, 8, 18), feast days and religious beliefs (2, 4, 13, 18), character and customs (1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12), and political and military problems (2–5, 15, 19, 25, 26). At the same time, Plutarch's *Bravery of Women*, which recalls Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* (*Ehoiai*), invites comparison with the *Parallel Lives*. Not only did Plutarch compose both works at around the same time,

c. 110 CE; above all, in his dedicatory letter to Clea, Plutarch justifies the composition of his treatise in terms highly evocative of his historical biographies: “it is not possible to learn better the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women from any other source than by putting lives beside lives and actions beside actions” (Boulogne (2002) 27–29; *Mul. vir.* 1c). Once again, it appears that within the context of Plutarch’s works, “biographies” are far from being incompatible with “antiquities.”

One cannot overemphasize the fact that the *Parallel Lives* contain an abundance of antiquarian knowledge by virtue of the fact that, in them, Plutarch explores all aspects of the past, including those areas where legend overlaps with history, such as foundation narratives, etymological myths, and religious practices, especially as regards Theseus, Romulus, Lycurgus, Numa, and Publicola. This is hardly a product of chance. Rather, it is indicative of the maturity of Plutarch’s thought. Plutarch composed his historical biographies later in life, from around 100, or shortly before, to 120 CE, and the “archaic” lives (*Theseus–Romulus*, *Lycurgus–Numa*, *Solon–Publicola*) held an important place over the course of the many years he spent analyzing and writing about the Greek and Roman past. On occasion, Plutarch even confesses to giving more importance to knowing how to abridge legend than to recording the greatest moments of history. For instance, in the preface to his *Life of Nicias*, Plutarch tells us that he gives only a cursory account of “those deeds which Thucydides and Philistus have set forth” – an allusion to their celebrated histories of the Peloponnesian War, and the Athenians’ expedition into Sicily in particular (415–413 BCE) – but that he has given careful attention to collecting “those details which have escaped most writers, and which others have mentioned casually, or which are found on ancient votive offerings or in public decrees” (*Nic.* 1.5). In fact, what we might refer to as Plutarch’s antiquarian erudition, by comparison with the knowledge of men such as Scaliger, Montfaucon, and Férét, is immediately evident in his numerous references to the decrees, treatises, and official documents from the Classical Age. Plutarch found such material in the *Pséphismatôn Synagôgê*, compiled by the Macedonian historian Craterus (c. 321–279 BCE) in the beginning of the third century BCE. For example, in his *Life of Cimon*, Plutarch defers to Craterus in reference to an alleged treaty between the Persians and the Athenians following Cimon’s victory at the battle of Eurymedon: “But in the decrees collected by Craterus there is a copy of the treaty in its due place, as though it had actually been made” (*Cim.* 13.6; see also *Arist.* 26.4 where Craterus’ exceptional lack of documentation occasions Plutarch’s praise of his otherwise rigorous work: “Craterus furnishes no documentary proof of this – no judgment of the court, no decree of indictment – although he is wont to record such things with all due fullness, and to adduce his authorities”). Craterus is also Plutarch’s source when quoting from Pericles’ decrees, which are all that remain of his writings (*Per.* 8.7). These include the signed decree calling Cimon back from exile in 457 (*Per.* 10.4), the 448/7 decree inviting Greeks from Europe and Asia to a Pan-Hellenic congress in Athens (*Per.* 17.1), and the “Megarian decree,” which, according to some interpretations, was at the origin of the Peloponnesian War (*Per.* 30.1–3). Craterus’ collection also contains a complete version of the document in which Alcibiades is formally accused of revealing, and parodying, the Eleusinian Mysteries (*Alc.* 22.4).

Plutarch was also interested in studying and interpreting the ancient inscriptions he himself saw in several cities. In refuting an affirmation Herodotus makes in his *Histories* (9.70), Plutarch mentions an epigram he found on an altar in Plataea, composed by the poet Simonides of Ceos in honor of those who died at the battle of Plataea (*Arist.* 19.7,

20.4). In Athens he consulted the story, engraved in stone, concerning the statue of Athena Hygieia, or “healer” (*Per.* 13.9). In Delphi, he would certainly have verified that the *promanteia*, or “right of consulting the oracle in behalf of others” which the Delphians awarded Sparta, and later Athens, were in fact “carved upon the forehead of the bronze wolf in the sanctuary” (*Per.* 21.2).

Plutarch shows great care in matters of chronology regarding the figures of Theseus, Romulus, and Lycurgus (*Thes.* 1.4; *Rom.* 3.2–3; *Lyc.* 1.2–6), as well as the alleged encounter between Croesus and Solon (*Sol.* 28.1). He also consulted public “chronological data” in order to determine whether Themistocles sought refuge with Xerxes, or with his son Artaxerxes (*Them.* 27.1). He refers to the *Examination of Chronology* by “a certain Clodius” in discussing the origins of and dates when Romulus’ successor Numa lived and died (*Num.* 1.1–4). Finally, Plutarch was intrigued by the monuments and archaeological remains in Delphi and Plataea, two regions he knew well, and those of Delos, Athens, and Rome, because such artifacts are also revealing of the past.

Plutarch’s interest in the past is of particular importance because his immense antiquarian knowledge shows that, for him, the world he evokes is not entirely buried or static, or even dead. In writing of Agesilaus, Plutarch takes pride in knowing that his work is better documented than that of Xenophon or Dicaearchus: “Xenophon, it is true, has not recorded the name of the daughter of Agesilaus, and Dicaearchus expressed great indignation that neither her name nor that of the mother of Epaminondas were known to us; but we have found in the Lacedaemonian records that the wife of Agesilaus was named Cleora, and his daughters Eupolia and Proauga. And one can see his spear also, *which is still preserved at Sparta*, and which is not at all different from that of other men” (*Ages.* 19.10–11). Plutarch’s allusion to Agesilaus’ extant spear suggests that the ancient artifacts he “gathers” then “disseminates” in the *Lives* – and which are incorporated into the *Moralia* by later generations spanning from Lamprias to Planudes – take on their full meaning when placed in the context of his own times. The same can be said of enduring ancient customs, as evinced by the following remark from Plutarch’s observations concerning the courage of Spartan children in his *Life of Lycurgus*: “And even *this story gains credence from what their youths now endure*, many of whom I have seen expiring under the lash at the altar of Artemis Orthia” (*Lyc.* 18.2). Traces of antiquity can, on occasion, effectively blur the boundary between past and present.

Antiquarianism may well be one of the most valorized components of classical Greek and Roman culture, at least as concerns the cultivated literary and historical milieus which Plutarch frequented and represents in his *Table Talk*. Plutarch’s erudition, however, is far from being a mere conversational adornment for the cultivated elite. Rather, it constitutes a treasure common to both Romans and Greeks, effectively bridging the two cultures Plutarch ostensibly juxtaposed in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*. In other words, Plutarch’s erudition has the reassuring effect of a two-faced Janus that brings a sense of unity to his otherwise disjointed fragments of two worlds.

3. The Birth of a Greco-Roman Classicism

Plutarch never yields to his passion for antiquarian knowledge gratuitously, nor for the purpose of “massing together useless material of research” (*Nic.* 1.5) In fact, this knowledge acquires significance exclusively within the context of the parallels he draws

between Greece and Rome, the most explicit of which are found in the *Lives* and his obviously antiquarian treatises, the Greek and Roman *Questions*. We recall that Plutarch conceived of his biographical and etiological parallels at around the same time, after 96. (In *Quaest. Rom.* 50 Plutarch mentions the reign of Domitian, who was assassinated in 96.) Plutarch also weaves numerous “questions” into his oldest Roman *Lives* (*Romulus*, *Numa*, *Publicola*, *Camillus*, *Coriolanus*), thereby incorporating his reflections on monuments, sites, and customs within the context of national origins which, of course, raises historical questions pertinent to Greeks and Romans alike. The same is true of Plutarch’s *Theseus* and *Lycurgus*. We would be mistaken, then, to consider Plutarch’s antiquarian research as a preliminary version of the *Lives*. For Plutarch, antiquarian evidence is a form of memory, and it is essential that it remain visible “to the present day” (*Arist.* 20.3), “to this day” (*Nic.* 28.5), “among us” (*Quaest. Graec.* 29), to borrow just a few phrases that recur throughout Plutarch’s *Questions* as well as in the *Lives*. (See also *Quaest. Graec.* 16, 40, and 57.) As such, antiquarian evidence is proof of both an historical continuity between past and present, and a cultural unity between Greeks and Romans. When Plutarch looks upon the monuments of the Athenian Acropolis built by Pericles, it is less in admiration of the past than because “each one of them, in its beauty, was even then and at once antique (*arkhaion*); but in the freshness of its vigor it is, even to the present day (*mekhri nun*), recent and newly wrought” (*Per.* 13.5). Antiquity is still discernible in Pericles’ Acropolis because even in his day it already had an aura of antiquity. This is precisely the definition of classicism (Swain (1996) 67–85). Along with the lettered aristocracy of his times and that of the Second Sophistic, Plutarch contributed to the emergence of an “everlasting civilization” (*ktêma es aiei*), a classical civilization from the Greco-Roman past. Neither Greeks nor Romans could have achieved this individually. Whether Plutarch is looking at the Acropolis or describing the most trivial ritual of the Roman religion, his gaze constantly recalls the past to life. There is nothing static about his antiquarian knowledge. Rather, we must replace it in the socio-historical context of the Later Roman Empire, a time when specialized knowledge was not yet the object of principled admiration. For Plutarch, knowledge about the past serves to create an enduring Greco-Roman civilization without requiring that either people renounce their specific contribution to it.

Plutarch did not compose a *Prayer on the Acropolis* in the manner of Renan (1823–1892), who, when faced with “the Greek miracle” found that “the Romans were merely vulgar soldiers; the majesty of the most beautiful Roman, an August or a Trajan, was nothing more than posturing when compared to the ease and simple nobility of these proud and peaceful citizens” (*Prayer on the Acropolis*, 1883). Having lived under the Roman Empire and studied authors such as Polybius, Plutarch learned that vanquishers were known to integrate the cultural heritage of those they conquered, as long as they themselves were not considered “barbarous” by the vanquishers. Since the end of the third century BCE, the Roman conquest had considerably impacted Greek ethnography and historiography. In effect, the exegete Polybius, who held the Romans’ military superiority in high regard, did not consider the religious, ritual, political, and social practices of Rome, and especially the Roman constitution, with the same critical distance with which he had studied the Gauls, Carthaginians, or the Iberians. The consequences of the Roman conquest require that one reconsider the significance of what it means to be “Greek” or “barbarian,” and especially to reconsider the relationship between these two terms, because from that time onward the diffusion of

Hellenism was under Rome's control. As a result, we must also reexamine and confront anew all of Greek and Roman knowledge, down to its most infinitesimal parts (*Alex.* 1.2).

Second only to the *Lives*, Plutarch's Greek and Roman *Questions* are two of his most accomplished efforts to draw forth the similarities between Greek and Roman cultures. Together, these treatises can be seen to complement the *Lives*. Let us turn now to examine the *Questions* in greater detail, the better to understand how the antiquarian knowledge Plutarch gathers there correlates with his efforts to analyze Roman customs in relation to Greek specificities.

4. An Antiquarian Past for the Present

In the Lamprias Catalogue, the two treatises *Aitiaí Rhômaikai* and *Aitiaí Hellénôn*, which the moderns commonly referred to as the *Roman Questions* and *Greek Questions*, are numbered 138 and 166 respectively, and thus are not consecutive. Following the order of the Lamprias Catalogue, the obvious pendant to the *Roman Questions* would be the treatise *Aitiaí Barbarikai*, numbered 139 (see Schmidt (2008)). The catalogue also mentions four other *Aitiaí*, numbered 149, 160, 161, and 167, which are not by Plutarch. Following later manuscript practices, all seven of these treatises are systematically presented together, grouped under a title which either includes the Roman and Greek *Questions* (*Kephalaîon Katagraphe*—meaning “Index of chapters,” “List of brief notices”—*Problēmata Ploutarkhou*), or refers to the *Greek Questions* alone (*Hellênika*, *Problēmata hellênika*, *Aitiaí Hellénôn*).

Consequently, none of the subsequent manuscript editions provides a title for Plutarch's *Roman Questions* and *Greek Questions*, which, what is more, are not mentioned in any of the texts that have survived from antiquity. Fortunately, Plutarch himself refers to them twice. In his *Life of Camillus*, when discussing the fortune or misfortune associated with certain days of the calendar, Plutarch tells us that “this subject has been more carefully treated in my *Roman Questions* (*en tōi Peri Aitiôn [...] Rhômaikôn*)” (*Cam.* 19.8; *Mor.* 269F; *Quaest. Rom.* 87). Then, in his *Life of Romulus*, Plutarch sends the reader to his *Roman Questions* for a more detailed discussion of marriage in Roman culture: “on which topic I have spoken more fully in my *Roman Questions*” (*Mor.* 285C; *Quaest. Rom.* 87). It would appear, then, that Plutarch entitled his treatise *Aitiaí Rhômaika* (sg.), and that the titular term *aitiaí* (pl.) used in the Lamprias Catalogue occasioned the erroneous Latin translation of *quaestiones* (pl.).

The most complete manuscript of Plutarch's works is the Planudean E manuscript, which contains both the *Lives* and the *Moralia*. It is the work of several copyists who more than likely produced it between 1350 and 1380. Here, the Greek and Roman *Questions* are listed under a single title (no. 62), which introduces the idea of a parallel for the first time: *Peri parallêlôn hellênikôn kai rhômaikôn* or *The Greek and Roman Parallels*. These same texts are also presented as two parts of a single treatise in the first Greek edition of the *Moralia*, published by Aldus in 1590 under the number 61. The practice of listing the Roman and Greek *Questions* under separate titles dates back to Vascosan's 1544 in-folio Latin edition *Plutarchi Chaeronei Ethica seu Moralia Opuscula*.... Vascosan based his own Latin edition on that of Ysingrinus (Basel, 1541), which contains only forty-two treatises and does not indicate a break after the 113th and final Roman question. It is from Vascosan's edition that Jacques Amyot (1513–1593) gleans the titles

Demandes des choses Romaines and *Demandes des choses Grecques* when composing his complete translation of the *Moralia* – *Oeuvres morales et meslées* – published in 1572. (Amyot also consulted Froben's Greek edition, published in Basel, in 1542, which he annotated and improved.) Amyot further underscores Vascosan's division of the Roman and Greek *Questions* into two treatises by attributing each one its own number and inscribing these in the margins of his translation (Aulotte (1965) 193). Finally, both treatises are listed 18th in Henri Estienne's 1572 Greek edition with Latin translation, following the order traditionally given to them since Xylander's 1570 Latin edition. The overarching idea that emerges from this brief history of Plutarch's treatises is that they have always been perceived as two complementary parts of a single entity. One could even argue that copyists, philologists, and translators have endeavored to reconstruct Plutarch's very intentions, such as they appear in the substance and organization of the antiquarian knowledge he gathers in them.

In these treatises, Plutarch puts forth 113 questions concerning the customs and institutions of Rome, and fifty-nine concerning the cities, language, and religious practices of the Greek world. Plutarch's use of the term *aition* ("cause," "origin"; *aitiai*, pl.) and its cognate *aitia* ("motive," "reason"), as well as his use of questions and answers as a structuring device, inscribe his treatises in the literary and scientific traditions of *Aitiai* and *Problēmata* familiar to the cultured public for whom he wrote (Boulogne (1992) 4683–4687). The *Aitiai* tradition dates at least as far back as the explanations of religious practices and legends found in mythological narratives of the sixth century BCE; however, its most famous example is the *Aitiai* by the Alexandrian poet Callimachus (c. 310–240 BCE), a collection of mythological narratives about religious ceremonies and other customs. Cato the Elder's (234–149 BCE) *Origines*, although comprising seven books of questions and answers, resembles more the genre of *Problēmata* frequently used in philosophical writings. One of the longest treatises attributed to Aristotle takes its name from this genre. Aristotle's *Problēmata* are composed of thirty-eight sections, each of which addresses a precise theme ("the use of wine and drunkenness," "climatic conditions," etc.) and offers a variable number of answers depending on the section. Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus, also left several collections of political, moral, physical, and erotic *Problēmata*, and there exists another collection addressing physics and medicine entitled *Hippocratic Problems*. This manner of presenting knowledge was still very much alive during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as evinced, for example, by the twelfth-century W manuscript (*Vindobonensis phil. Gr.* 129), which places both of Plutarch's treatises under the title *Problēmata Ploutarkhou*. But the most famous example from antiquity brings us back to Plutarch himself. Plutarch's treatise *Symposiaka Problēmata*, more commonly referred to by the title *Table Talk*, is composed of nine books, written between 110 and 120 CE, which represent a number of guests from Greek and Roman high society who have gathered around a banquet in the Greek tradition (*symposion*) to partake of both wine and discussion, the better to enjoy each other's wisdom.

The interrogative phrase *Dia ti?* ("For what reason?") that occurs in 111 of the 113 *Roman Questions*, as well as the hypotheses Plutarch offers in response to these, all attest to his desire to find the causes or origins of the "problems" he propounds (Payen, in Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen (1999) 35–37). The collection derives a certain unity from its four principal themes: ritual, parentage, institutions, and the calendar. In seeking to

ascertain the similarities and differences between Greece and Rome, Plutarch, who not coincidentally was a Delphic priest, devotes seventy etiological inquiries to ritual. Twenty-six etiologies address the matter of parentage in relation to marriage, education, funerary rituals, and forms of sociability. Political and military institutions, and the various games in which Romans took part, form the basis of eighteen problems. The different ways Romans divided time appear in four questions. Plutarch's determination to seek the origin and meaning of present-day customs in Rome's "archaic" past is evident throughout the treatise. For Plutarch, it is the ancient quality of the gods, rituals, and social practices (such as funerals) which constitutes the living foundation of Roman culture, and it is precisely this that he seeks to convey to his Greek contemporaries. That Plutarch addresses this work primarily to his Greek readers is made manifest by his translations and commentaries (*Quaest. Rom.* 2, 13, 34, 54, 62, 63, 67, 69, 72, 74, 99, 107, etc.), and by his use of the collective "we" (*Quaest. Rom.* 19, 40, 57).

Plutarch uses more or less the same two interrogative phrases in presenting all of the questions that appear in this treatise: *Dia ti?* ("For what reason?" *Quaest. Rom.* 1–104, 106–110, 113) – which Aristotle coined in his *Problēmata*, as mentioned earlier – and *Dia tina aitian?* ("On what motive?" *Quaest. Rom.* 105, 112). However, in responding to these questions, Plutarch offers up to six hypotheses, a figure of style virtually absent from the *Greek Questions*. His first "question" offers a case in point:

1. Why do they bid the bride touch fire and water?

Is it that of these two, being reckoned as elements or first principles, fire is masculine and water feminine, and fire supplies the beginnings of motion and water the function of the subsistent element or the material? Or is it because fire purifies and water cleanses, and a married woman must remain pure and clean? Or is it that, just as fire without moisture is unsustaining and arid, and water without heat is unproductive and inactive, so also male and female apart from each other are inert, but their union in marriage produces the perfection of their life together? Or is it that they must not desert each other, but must share together every sort of fortune, even if they are destined to have nothing other than fire and water to share with each other? (*Quaest. Rom.* 263E–F)

Plutarch's accumulation of hypotheses in the *Roman Questions* is a rhetorical mark of surprise, as practiced in Greek ethnography since Hecataeus and Herodotus. When examining Romans and Roman culture, Plutarch enumerates the "surprising things" (*thaumata*) which trouble those Greeks desirous of knowing better this peculiar "other" people with whom they must coexist. As Plutarch explores the similarities and differences between Greeks and Romans, his thinking gradually evolves toward the parallel construction characteristic of the *Lives* which, we recall, he undoubtedly wrote around 110 CE, at the same time he wrote the *Questions* (Boulogne (2002) 104–105). In fact, if the answers Plutarch gives in his *Greek Questions* are almost always decisive and presented in narrative form, some of the hypotheses in his *Roman Questions* do also, on occasion, develop into a narrative or a lengthy historical commentary (*Quaest. Rom.* 16, 39, 72, 74, 98, 109, 111). The detail of Plutarch's rubrics effectively invites the reader to navigate back and forth between Roman and Greek cultures.

To all appearances, Plutarch gleans his documentation from books (Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen (1999) 25–28). In his *Life of Demosthenes* (2.2), Plutarch himself

tells us that he has a poor command of Latin, which is probably why he consulted Greek experts on early Roman history, such as Dionysius of Halicarnassus and king Juba II of Mauritania, contemporaries of Augustus. Varro is the Latin author Plutarch most frequently uses and he gleans directly from him, or by way of Juba, the material for fifty-three questions. The grammarian and antiquarian Verrius Flaccus (first century CE) is another of Plutarch's important sources; his works figure in forty-five passages. From all of these authors, Plutarch acquires a method or manner of thinking that consists of going back to the origins of history and language in order to make the present more intelligible.

To be sure, Plutarch's Greek and Roman *Questions* must be placed in the same genre. As argued above, even though it is impossible to know with any certainty the original title of Plutarch's *Greek Questions*, the fact that the two collections are paired together throughout the manuscript tradition and early print editions attests to their formal similarities. We recall that Plutarch presents the fifty-nine categories through which he examines the Greek world in the form of questions, as he does the 113 categories concerning Roman customs, and in both treatises Plutarch responds with one or more answers presented in the form of a series of hypotheses or a narrative. Furthermore, the two collections form an obvious diptych, or parallel, in the manner of Plutarch's historical biographies. However, the undeniable formal similarities between these treatises do not hide the differences that even the most casual reader will notice in moving from the *Roman Questions* to the *Greek Questions*. These differences concern the themes Plutarch addresses, as well as the rhetorical design of his questions and answers, both of which are closely related.

And yet, beneath the apparent disorder of Plutarch's numerous and seemingly directionless observations there lies a more coherent perspective which leads the reader to remark that Plutarch brings to light two important thematic factors. These lend a sense of unity to the Greek world dating from archaic times to Plutarch's own times. The first resides in the use of a single or "same language" (Hdt. 8.144) that annuls the differences between regional dialects (*Quaest. Graec.* 8, 9). In the *Greek Questions*, Plutarch effectively compiles a sort of repository of the Greek language by using the interrogative phrases "who is...?" (*tis*) and "what is...?" (*ti*), which call for precise identifications and definitions. These in turn accumulate and preserve rare words, some of which have survived today thanks only to Plutarch (*Quaest. Graec.* 4, 10, 16, 21, 23, 38). The second unifying factor that Plutarch valorizes is the lifestyle characteristic of Greek cities. Life in an ancient Greek city (*polis*) was shaped by a number of collective institutions and customs, such as assemblies, tribunals, magistracies, civic participation, and worship of the city's patron gods and goddesses. The *Questions* retrace Greek history and delineate a typology of these and other enduring elements which outlasted the effects of migration and the uncertainties born of conflict. The Greek language and *polis* confer on Greek civilization a certain continuity by way of three factors in particular: political institutions, the foundation of numerous cities, and religious customs, including divine sanctuaries that attest to a thriving and inclusive polytheism.

The different rhetorical forms Plutarch uses in presenting the questions and answers in each treatise mark another difference between these (Payen, in Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen (1999) 35–39). Whereas we find more or less the same two interrogative forms in all of Plutarch's *Roman Questions*, we encounter as many as nine different interrogative

phrases in the last thirty-four of his *Greek Questions*. However, since the first twenty-five of these are formed with the same interrogative phrases as their Roman counterparts, one could argue that the modes of inquiry he uses to examine the Greeks incorporate those he uses to explore Rome. The answers to Plutarch's Roman and Greek questions are also quite different. As we have seen, in the *Roman Questions* they take the form of a series of as many as six hypotheses, whereas Plutarch gives a predominantly narrative form to his answers in the *Greek Questions*. On the one hand, the accumulation of hypotheses conveys an element of surprise characteristic of Greek ethnographic inquiry, while on the other hand Plutarch's use of narrative underscores his familiarity with Greek culture, as evinced by the following passage:

35. Why was it the custom for the Bottiaean maidens to chant as they danced, "Let us go to Athens"?

They relate that the Cretans in accordance with a vow sent a consecrated offering of men to Delphi; but the men who had been sent, when they saw that there was no abundance there, set out from Delphi to found a colony. They settled first in Iapygia, but later occupied this region of Thrace. There were some Athenians included among them; for it appears that Minos did not destroy the young persons whom the Athenians sent him for tribute, but kept them by him as servants. Accordingly, some who were descended from these Athenians and had come to be considered Cretans were included in this company sent to Delphi. Wherefore the daughters of the Bottiaeans, in remembrance of their lineage, were wont to sing in their festivals, "Let us go to Athens."

Ultimately, however, the detail of Plutarch's rubrics suggests that the boundary between Roman and Greek cultures is permeable. The erudition Plutarch demonstrates in this treatise allows us to construct an image of the works contained in Plutarch's library. Two major categories are immediately apparent. Most of the works Plutarch mentions span from Homer, the "Poet" of *Quaest. Graec.* 36, to Theophrastus, Aristotle's successor at the Lyceum (*Quaest. Graec.* 42). Plutarch was also an avid reader of historians from the third and second centuries BCE, such as Istros, a student of Callimachus (*Quaest. Graec.* 43), Anaxandridas (*Quaest. Graec.* 9), and Socrates of Argos (*Quaest. Graec.* 23, 24, 36, 50, 51). However, Plutarch's readers would not have expected him to list his sources because many of the works to which he refers were known by all. These include the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (*Quaest. Graec.* 14, 26, 31, 34, 41, 43, 44, 48, 58), the 158 Constitutions (*Politeiai*) gathered under Aristotle's initiative and which formed the basis of his *Politics* (*Quaest. Graec.* 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, etc.), as well as the great historians from Herodotus to Diodorus, and those who had written works on cities such as Cyprus (*Quaest. Graec.* 2), Crete (*Quaest. Graec.* 21), Rhodes (*Quaest. Graec.* 27), Samos (*Quaest. Graec.* 20, 54–57), the cities of Euboea (*Quaest. Graec.* 22, 31), Megara (*Quaest. Graec.* 16), Aegina (*Quaest. Graec.* 44), as well as those of the Peloponnesian region, including Arcadia (*Quaest. Graec.* 39), Elis (*Quaest. Graec.* 47), and Argos (*Quaest. Graec.* 51) (see Schettino). Greek civilization, as Plutarch portrays it, is nothing less than a universe of archaic and classical cities which preserved, well before Rome, the cultural and political unity of the Mediterranean. Seen from this perspective, Plutarch is not only an antiquarian; he is, above all perhaps, a facilitator of cultural exchange and intercultural fluency.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The ancients were well versed in matters of local and national historical traditions. Regarding Greek cities, see Jacoby (1949). On Rome, see Rawson (1972); Moatti (1997) 99–155. The significance of antiquarian works to understanding antiquity has been profoundly influenced by Arnaldo Momigliano's works. See especially his 1950 article "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," reproduced in *Contributo alla storia degli studi Classici* ((1955), (1979²) 67–106; French translation Momigliano (1983)), as well as the more recent perspectives gathered in Miller (2007), especially Peter N. Miller, pp. 3–65; Riccardo di Donato, pp. 66–96; Ingo Herklotz, pp. 127–153; and Wilfried Nippel, pp. 207–228. For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Grell (1993) and (1995) 123–143. Regarding Plutarch's role in the cultural appropriation of the Roman and Greek past, see C.P. Jones's classic study (1971). The context of the Second Sophistic and the birth of Greco-Roman classicism are nicely elucidated by Swain (1996) and Frazier (1996) 32–39. Two works in particular have shed light on the meaning of Plutarch's Roman and Greek *Questions*: Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen (1999) and Boulogne (2002). And also, without forgetting the barbarians, Schmidt (2008) 165–183.

PART III

Plutarch's Biographical Projects

CHAPTER 17

The Lives of the Caesars

Aristoula Georgiadou

1. Introduction

Plutarch's *Lives of the Caesars* were originally a series of *Lives* of the Roman emperors running consecutively from Augustus to Vitellius and are listed as items 26–27 and 29–33 in the Lamprias Catalogue. The collection of the imperial biographies culminated in 69 (all dates are CE, unless otherwise stated), the year during which “the house of the Caesars, the *Palatium*, received four emperors” (*Galb.* 1.8); only one, Vespasian, succeeded in going beyond that year and ruled for an entire decade without being eliminated (as was the case of Galba and Vitellius) or committing suicide (like Otho). Unlike Suetonius, who begins his *De vita Caesarum* with Julius Caesar, Plutarch commences his own series of imperial biographies with Augustus. The absence of Julius Caesar from Plutarch's *Caesars* has been used as a dating criterion for the collective work (see section 2), while its presence in the Suetonian collection has been variously explained (Baldwin (1983) 50; Bowersock (1998) 197). It also happens that the *Augustus* is the only *Life* of the series from which we can form any idea about the emperor based on material from Plutarch's *Cicero*, *Brutus*, and *Antony* (on Augustus' early political career) and a collection of fifteen anecdotes about him preserved in the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (206F–208A). Some of these anecdotes were most likely used in the *Augustus* and it is fair to suppose that they betray, to some extent at least, the drift of the lost *Life*, as they deal more closely with Augustus' private life over a greater period of time than is covered in the *Galba* or *Otho* (Jones (1971) 79–80; Ash (1997) 191; Pelling (2002) 65–90; Stadter (2005) 425–426). Would this aspect suggest a different method of characterization and narrative technique for the *Augustus* from that adopted in the *Galba*, *Otho*, and *Vitellius*? The evidence does not support any firm conclusion. As for the other lost *Lives*, it is impossible to surmise from the few scattered references in

Plutarch's works how he would have treated his material. He obviously refers to the *Nero* at *Galba* 2.1 (see also *De cohib. ira* 461F; *De sera* 567F; and *Prae. ger. reip.* 810A for further anecdotal material on Nero), while an anecdote on Tiberius assigned to Plutarch may derive from the lost *Life of Tiberius* (Damasc. *Vit. Isid.* 64 Zintzen = fr. 182 Sandbach; also *De def. or.* 419D, on Tiberius' philhellenic tastes).

2. Date

The series of imperial *Lives* cannot be dated with any precision. More than a century ago, Leo ((1990/1901) 156) drew attention to the “unausgebildete Form” of the *Galba* and *Otho*, thus pointing to a date of composition prior to the *Parallel Lives*. Plutarch may have had no experience in composing biographies before launching into the *Caesars*, although several other biographies recorded in the Lamprias Catalogue – the *Lives* of Heracles (no. 34), Hesiod (no. 35), Pindar (no. 36), Crates (no. 37), Daïphantes (no. 38), Aristomenes (no. 39), and Aratus (no. 49; probably the poet of that name) – may have been worked on prior to the *Caesars* (Bowersock (1998) 196); finally, the two free-standing biographies *Aratus* and *Artaxerxes* were probably composed between the *Caesars* and the *Parallel Lives* (Flacelière (1980) 116 n. 13; see also Almagor).

The composition of the *Caesars* belonged definitely to the period after the death of Vitellius, whose biography constituted the last of the series. There are two additional *termini post quem* for the series: the first is provided by a reference in *Otho* 14.2 to L. Mestrius Florus' consulship under Vespasian, which probably dated to 75, and the second is deduced from a rather trivial detail on Verginius Rufus' *gêras* in *Galba* 10.4. Given that Rufus was born in 14/15, and *gêras* suggests a man over sixty, this allows for a *terminus post quem* of about 74/75 and a *terminus ante quem* of 97, the year Rufus died (Jones (1995) 117; Bowersock (1998) 201–202; Stadter (2005) 428 n. 38, 429).

The termination of the series with Vitellius has often been explained as indicating that the work was composed under the Flavians; although this need not be the case, it was normal for a historian of the empire to close his work with the dynasty prior to that under which he lived (Bowersock (1998) 201, and Matthews (2007) 292, for the cases of Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus). The exclusion of the Flavians from the *Caesars* lends support to a date of composition before Domitian's death in 96 and the end of the Flavian dynasty (Hardy (1890) xxix; Wilamowitz (1995) 65–66 [= (1926) 269]; Jones (1995) 117 [= (1966) 71] and (1971) 72–73); more specifically, Mommsen, Jones, Bowersock, and Pelling have argued for the possibility of composition in the reign of Domitian (81–96). Jones postulated initially a *terminus ante quem* of 96, and later on argued for a date before 93 during which the senator Junius Mauricus, “one of the best men in Rome” according to Plutarch (*Galb.* 8.8), was exiled and his brother, Arulenus Rusticus, was executed for treason (Tac. *Agr.* 45.1). Hence the four critics locate the composition of the imperial series in a Domitianic environment (clearly no later than 97, the year of Verginius Rufus' death) with the exclusion of Mauricus' period of exile between 93 and 96 (Mommsen (1870) 297; Jones (1995) 117 [= (1966) 71] and (1971) 72–73; followed by Little and Ehrhardt (2008) 3; Bowersock (1998) 201–202; and Pelling, in Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010) 415). Geiger, Syme, and Ash, on the other hand, assign the Greek imperial *Lives* to a later date, in the aftermath of 96, during

the brief reign of Nerva, at the same time as the composition of Tacitus' *Agricola*. As a dating criterion Geiger uses the absence of a biography of Julius Caesar from Plutarch's imperial *Lives* and considers the inclusion of Caesar in the list of emperors a development of the period after Trajan (Geiger (1975) 450–451 and (2002) 93–94; Syme (1958) 674 and (1980) 108–110; Ash (1997) 203). Geiger's criterion has been contested by Sage ((1990) 894 n. 10). Lastly, Flacelière extends the date to the reign of Trajan, in the period 97–100 (Flacelière and Chambry (1979) 144; Flacelière (1980) 114–116).

More recently Stadter has reopened the question of the chronology of Plutarch's *Caesars* postulating a much earlier date, under the reign of Vespasian (Stadter (2005) 428–432). He argues against the use of Caecina Alienus' unfavorable portrayal in *Otho* 6.6 – Caecina is described as ordinary neither in voice nor in manner; he was offensive and outlandish, a big man who was keen to wear trousers and long sleeves in a Gallic manner – as an indication of composition under Domitian's reign. Although this reference has led some scholars (Jones (1995) 116–117; Bowersock (1998) 202) to assume that Plutarch wrote the *Caesars* after Caecina's death (he was executed for treason by Titus in 79; Suet. *Tit.* 6.2), Stadter claims that the reference to Caecina cannot be taken as providing a *terminus post quem* of 79. He acknowledges that the only secure *terminus post quem* is L. Mestrius Florus' consulship under Vespasian (c. 75) and assumes a connection between Florus, the undertaking of the *Caesars*, and the composition of the unidentified common source of Plutarch and Tacitus (see section 3). Florus, a common friend of Plutarch and Vespasian (Suet. *Vesp.* 22), may have inspired and supported such a major work, which would not be just another account of imperial history presented in Greek, but would fill a different need, for other histories written by Romans were also available (cf. Josephus, who comments that many writers, both Greek and Roman, dealt with Nero and the events after his death; *BJ* 4.496; Baldwin (1986)). Plutarch's work "would evaluate the emperors and the imperial system on the basis of Greek political and ethical theory." The obvious moment then for such an account, Stadter claims, would be with the beginning of the Flavian dynasty ((2005) 431).

3. The Sources

Plutarch mentions no source by name in the *Galba*, whereas in the *Otho* he cites Cluvius Rufus (3.2) and (Julius) Secundus (9.3), a rhetorician and secretary *ab epistulis* to Otho. Some information may derive from eyewitnesses' reports (as in the case of L. Mestrius Florus, whose morbid recollection of an incident after the battle of Bedriacum Plutarch records in *Oth.* 14.2; cf. also 14.1) or from autopsy (cf. the description of Otho's tomb in *Oth.* 18.2). Occasionally he also refers to anonymous sources, which are far too vague to provide any help (*Galb.* 27.2, *pleistoi*; 27.3, *enioi, hoi de*; *Oth.* 9.1, *hup' allōn*; 9.4, *heterōn de*; 14.1, *hoi pleistoi*; see further Hardy (1890) xxxv). Sustained resemblances between Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho* and Tacitus' *Histories* 1 and 2.11–51, too numerous to be explained by coincidence, would either suggest a direct use of one by the other, or the use of a common source, no longer extant, for their accounts of year 69, preferably a Roman historian who was followed by both writers.

There has been an impressive efflux of monographs and articles on the type of source(s) used by Plutarch and Tacitus in their respective works since the latter part of the

nineteenth century, albeit with few firm results. The following overview covers some of the most representative views expressed on this complex and intricate matter.

In the first place, both external and internal evidence speak against the view maintained by Lange (1880) 11–13; Lezius (1884); Alma (1897) esp. 22–23; Raoss (1960) 46–122, that Plutarch used Tacitus' *Histories* as a source. The majority of critics have, in fact, concurred that Plutarch's imperial *Lives* most likely predated the *Histories* of which the first three books dealing with the civil war of 69 would have been completed between 103 and 106, thus later than the *Caesars'* presumed date of composition (Mommsen (1870) 298; Syme (1958) 674; Flacelière and Chambry (1979) 144; Flacelière (1980) 114 (between 106 and 109 CE); Martin (1981) 190; Sage (1990) 863; Ash and Wellesley (2009) xxix; see also section 2). Therefore, on chronological grounds alone, Plutarch would not have drawn directly from Tacitus. Internal evidence also makes this hypothesis implausible, for noticeable discrepancies between the two narratives speak against the possibility that Tacitus was Plutarch's source (Peter (1865) 42; Hardy (1890) xxxv and xxix–xxxiv for a list of divergences; Syme (1958) 674; Sage (1990) 894). The possibility that a Roman historian like Tacitus could have drawn upon a Greek biographical source was apparently deemed as not deserving any discussion, or as simply inconceivable. In Hardy's words, "the very statement of a suggestion so improbable is sufficient to discredit it" ((1890) xxiv). Going against the grain, Jones toys boldly with this very possibility ((1971) 76–77), which is strongly contested by Flacelière ((1980) 117).

There remains the common source. The difficulty of tracking down the lost source is increased by the fact that Tacitus, like Plutarch in the imperial *Lives*, cites his sources sparingly; in the extant books of the *Histories* he names three authorities, Vipstanus Messalla (3.25 and 28), Pliny the Elder (3.28), and Sisenna (3.51). Marked concordances in episodes, arrangement, and even in language between Plutarch and Tacitus have led to the belief that both had drawn upon the same authority and that neither writer is indebted to the other (Mommsen (1870) 298; Syme (1958) 674–676; Drexler (1959) 153–178; Fuhrmann (1960) 264–269; Hanslik (1961) 113; Townend (1964a); Damon (2003) 24 n. 21). The search for the source's identity long ago triggered tremendous scholarly activity. Mommsen ((1870) 318–322) proposed the consular historian Cluvius Rufus – one of the major annalistic historians of the first century CE – who is mentioned as authority for official documents being sent to Spain with the title "Nero Otho" (*Oth.* 3.2; the source is left unnamed in Suet. *Oth.* 7.1, while the incident is omitted in Tacitus), and is identified as a source by Tacitus in the *Annals* 13.20.2, 14.2.1, and the *Histories* 4.43.1 (Townend (1964a); Pelling, in Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010) 421). Mommsen's suggestion of Cluvius Rufus was anticipated by Peter ((1865) 40–44), but later retracted in favor of Pliny (Peter (1906) CLII–CLV), and was followed by Godolphin ((1935) 326–328) and Flacelière (Flacelière and Chambry (1979) 144–145; Flacelière (1980) 117–119; the latter does not dismiss the possibility that Plutarch may have also read Tacitus. The likelihood that the biographer used Cluvius Rufus as a source is dismissed by Townend ((1960) 107; (1961) 239; (1964a) 342).

The majority of critics have cautiously assented to the thesis that the "common" source is Pliny the Elder, the author of the *Natural History*, who also wrote a continuation of the history of the Epicurean Aufidius Bassus (his history ended with Nero's ascension to the throne) entitled *a fine Aufidii Bassi* (the title is cited by Pliny's nephew, *Ep.* 3.5.6) – so Nissen (1871) 501–502, 506–514; Hardy (1890) lix; Fabia (1893) 1–129, 169–209;

Gercke (1895) 159–165; Townend (1964a) 344 and (1964b) 470–471; Sage (1990) 893–897. As for Momigliano, he initially opted for Pliny ((1931) 187), but later expressed doubts about this choice (*OCD* (1949) 377, as cited by Syme (1958) 675 n. 3). Still a different view is that while Tacitus used Pliny, Plutarch used both Pliny and Cluvius for his account (Wiedemann (1857) 46–57). One could also add to the host of sources for both writers Hirzel's list, which included besides the elder Pliny, Vipstanus Messalla, Cluvius Rufus, and the *acta diurna* – the open records of the state – (Hirzel (1851) 8–43). Groag rejected Pliny as a candidate and suggested Fabius Rusticus in his stead ((1897) 787–798). From these considerations, and despite arguments advanced especially by Groag, it is evident that Pliny emerges as the strongest candidate for the “common” source for Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho* and for the passages in Tacitus covering the same ground.

While preoccupation with *Quellenforschung* in Plutarch's imperial *Lives* and Tacitus' *Histories* (1 and 2.11–51) only barely engages scholarly attention nowadays, interest has shifted, in recent years, to other aspects of the *Lives*. As a result, the search for the source's identity appears to have reached an impasse. Reluctant to fathom further the lost source, Syme and Jones avow incertitude. The former acknowledges that the “common” source provides a valuable link in the line of the lost annalists between Livy and Tacitus and goes on to furnish a convincing portrait of its presumed author, whom he labels as “Ignotus.” What is more, he also introduces the possibility of Marius Celsus as one of the sources of information drawn upon by Tacitus' and Plutarch's “common” source. Yet he concludes that “It is safer to confess ignorance” regarding the source's identity (Syme (1958) 676, 180–181, 683, 675). Jones, distinctly skeptical about the “common source” theory, refrains from associating it with any of the aforementioned candidates and offers an interesting twist to it. Based on Plutarch's disclaimer in *Dem.* 2.2 that he undertook proper study of the Latin language later in his life, Jones places in doubt the biographer's ability to mine Latin sources for the composition of the *Caesars*, which was probably a work of an earlier period. Drawing attention to the biographer's preference for Greek sources rather than Latin (cf. the case of *Coriolanus*, which is almost exclusively based on Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and not on Livy), he ventures a suggestion that Plutarch could have used any of the lost Greek accounts for the year 69 reported by Josephus (*BJ* 4.496), and not necessarily a Latin one ((1971) 76–77). Jones' provocative view of Plutarch's “Greek historian” has, of course, not met without resistance (Syme (1980) 110). Tantalizing though it may be, it adds to the perplexity of the debate and gives rise to a different nexus of nebulous alternatives.

What is clear today is that in dealing with the period of 68–69 Plutarch, like Tacitus and Suetonius, was not uncritically attached to a single source but made use of secondary sources as well, such as reminiscences of friends and patrons (cf. his visit to the north of Italy during the Flavian period in the company of L. Mestrius Florus, who had joined Otho in the Bedriacum campaign; *Oth.* 14.2–3).

4. The Parallel Tradition

Josephus, an older contemporary of Tacitus, tells us that the time span from Nero's suicide to Vespasian's accession has been treated by many authors, both Greek and Roman (*BJ* 4.496). As luck would have it, Plutarch's narrative in *Galba* and *Otho*

“coincides” with other extant accounts of the same events, besides Tacitus’ *Histories* 1 and 2.11–51 (events surrounding the fall of Nero and Galba’s part in the events of 68 would have been narrated in the lost books of Tacitus’ *Annals*).

The Roman biographer Suetonius also wrote a sequential group of twelve imperial lives which survive substantially intact; the *De vita Caesarum* runs from Julius Caesar to Domitian and can be safely dated to the reign of Hadrian (Edwards (2000) viii). On the basis of the dedication of the work to Septicius Clarus, a praetorian prefect during the years 119–122 (Joan. Lydus, *de Mag.* 2.6), Townend ((1959) 285), Bowersock ((1998) 206), and Hurley ((2001) 7) argue for a composition date of *c.* 119–122 (definitely before 128, so Lindsay (1994) 461–464), thus later than Plutarch’s *Caesars* on all counts and Tacitus’ *Histories* (Fabia (1893) 152; see also section 3). The general resemblances between Suetonius’ *Galba* and *Otho* and Tacitus and Plutarch have been variously accounted for. It was argued that Suetonius followed Plutarch (Krause (1831) 6), Tacitus (Lehmann (1858) 40–47; Syme (1958) 781–782 remains skeptical), or a source common to all three. Suetonius’ source was identified with Cluvius Rufus (Peter (1865) 40–44 retracted later opting for Pliny the Elder, (1906) CLII–CLV; Mommsen (1870) 323; Townend (1972) 381), Pliny the Elder (Hardy (1890) lix; Fabia (1893) 184–299; Mooney (1930) 34) or a combination of the two (Wiedemann (1857) 46–57; Townend (1960) 105–106).

A parallel account of these events is also found in the Greek historian Cassius Dio, whose Book 64 (following the “standard” Leunclavius division of 1592, or Book 63 in the von Gutschmid/Boissevain system) of the *Roman History* surviving in an epitome by John Xiphilinus covers the period from the revolt against Nero in 68 to Otho’s suicide in 69 (Cluvius Rufus, Fabius Rusticus, and Pliny the Elder remain the principal candidates for Dio’s source, on which see Murison (1999) 15–17). Lastly Josephus (*BJ* 4.545–549), using the events in Italy in 69 as an analogue to the civil war in Judaea, touches cursorily upon the deaths of Galba and Otho.

5. The *Caesars*: A Different Kind of Biography?

The *Galba* and the *Otho*, listed together in the Lamprias Catalogue as item 32 (the pair was probably considered as a single book), are the only biographies preserved from that series. In an unduly disparaging appraisal of the two *Lives*, Wilamowitz ((1995) 65) claims that he would willingly have given them in exchange for the lost collection, the one which was devoted to famous compatriots and heroes (see section 2). While the total collection of the imperial *Lives* covered a period of a hundred years (from the defeat of Antony in 31 BCE to the death of Vitellius in 69), these two *Lives* cover only about nine months, from June 68 to April 69. Unlike Suetonius’ “independent” biographies, these two form a series of interconnected narratives, with the *Galba* entangled in the events of the *Nero* (*Galb.* 2, 4–9; cf. also the first chapter of Suetonius’ *Galba*, which could have served as a postscript to the *Nero*, on which see Syme (1980) 117–118; Georgiadou (1988) 354–355) and the *Otho* picking up the narrative where the *Galba* has left off with no further introductory remarks. In that respect, the two imperial *Lives* look less like the later *Parallel Lives* we are familiar with and more like a kind of continuous imperial history broken into segments by the successive reigns of the emperors (Leo (1990) 156;

Syme (1980) 105; Braun (1992) 102; Bowersock (1998) 204). Plutarch is fully aware of the oddity of his narrative, for in the prologue to the *Galba*, which seems to function as a prologue to the *Lives of Galba*, *Otho*, and *Vitellius*, he attempts to circumscribe the boundaries of his work *vis-à-vis* history:

To report in a detailed way each of the events which occurred belongs to pragmatic history; but it is not right even for me to omit such incidents as are worthy of mention in the deeds and experiences of the Caesars. (*Galb.* 2.5)

But he does so convolutedly, making it difficult for the reader to understand whether he means to differentiate his subject-matter from “pragmatic history” (i.e. the type of history that deals primarily with great political and military exploits, on which see Duff (1999) 28; also *historia pragmatōn*, “a history of facts,” in *Thes.* 1.2; the only other earlier occurrence of the phrase is in Polyb. 6.5.2) or to bring the two strands closer together. His fuzzy claim that he will not “omit such incidents as are *worthy of mention* in the deeds and experiences of the Caesars” (cf. also *Alex.* 1.1–3; *Nic.* 1.5) clearly demands some explanation. For even though Plutarch does not spell out clearly in what context he uses the phrase *axia logou* (“worthy of mention”), the implication is that he is not aiming at inclusiveness – the accurate and circumstantial narration of events belongs clearly to “pragmatic history” – but at selectiveness (cf. *Artax.* 8.1). He was apparently involved in the pruning and writing-up of material that was available to him for the period 68–69. His narrative is thus limited in its compass to include “memorable” incidents that are primarily related to the short period of the emperors’ reign (note the emphasis on the shortness of their rule at *Galb.* 1.8), while his fondness for those events which help to observe, but not necessarily uncover, the emperors’ character and manner is revealed in the narrative that follows. Plutarch makes, in fact, enough room for comments on the moral dimensions of the two emperors (e.g. on Galba: *Galb.* 3.4–5, 4.1, 6.6, 8.6, 11.2, 4, 15.1, 9, 16.4, 18.4, 21.2, 26.3, 29; on Otho: *Oth.* 3.1, 4.1, 5–6, 5.3, 9.2, 5, 13.3, 16.6, 18.3), even though the shortness of the period he embraces and the different approach adopted in the composition of these lives do not allow for an in-depth development of their characters. Plutarch’s disinterest in Galba and Otho as fully rounded personalities and his repeated emphasis on the collective power of the soldiers to which the two emperors fell prey seem to be reflecting both the unsettled circumstances that obtained during the period of the two emperors’ reigns and the period of the *Lives*’ composition (Syme and Ash, in alignment with Geiger, contend that the two *Lives* would have been written in the aftermath of 96, when Nerva adopted Trajan as his associate in power; see section 2). If Plutarch was seeing the circumstances of 69 through the filter of 96, because of their relevance, he would naturally tend to focus more closely on the destructive power of the soldiers and less on the emperors as individuals, as the role they played in the vicissitudes of the civil war was quite limited and did not offer possibilities for character development (Ash (1997) 191, 203–204).

Plutarch is not writing conventional biographies but is attempting to strike a middle ground between history and biography. In a more nuanced interpretation of this passage, Plutarch has been seen as attempting to engage with Aristotle’s judgment on history in the *Poetics* (1451b4–11). While for Aristotle history was less philosophical than poetry, because it dealt with the particular (*ta kath’ hekaston*) rather than the universal

(*ta katholou*), with “what Alcibiades did or what experiences he had” (cf. *ergois kai pathesi*, *Galb.* 2.5), Plutarch will show, through the emphasis he places on the danger of passion when it is not controlled by reason, how history can also convey “universal, moral, truths” (Duff (1999) 29; also 44–45). Plutarch is certainly capable of putting his own “spin” on the material that he draws upon.

It is difficult to apply strict genre distinctions to the extant *Caesars*, for they are neither full-fledged biographies in the sense of focusing on the central figure of the biography and narrating his life from birth to death in a single *Life* (although there is great variation in length and in the wealth of detail between the different lives in the *Parallel Lives*), nor typical historical narratives (on the historical texture of these imperial *Lives*, see also Pelling, in Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010) 416–417). Plutarch’s scope in the *Caesars* is admittedly much more limited, for he concentrates on the reigns of the emperors rather than their actual lives, on the historical narrative rather than the specifically biographical quality. What matters to him most are the unusual circumstances in which these two emperors came to power, how they exercised it, and how they left it. A peculiar stress is laid on the emperors’ impending fall and death (*Galb.* 2.3, 12.5, 14.3–5, 24.3, 26.7–27.4; *Oth.* 6.2, 15.5, 17, 18.3), and almost everything about their earlier lives and pre-imperial careers that is not relevant to their actions as rulers is omitted.

Just like the *Parallel Lives*, which were expected to be read in pairs, the extant imperial biographies (and probably the lost *Vitellius* as well) were intended to be read in sequence (with *Galba* followed or matched (?) by *Otho*), and not independently, as was the case with the free-standing biographies of *Aratus* and *Artaxerxes*; furthermore, the way in which the *Galba* and *Otho* are constructed seems to anticipate the binary structure of *Agis and Cleomenes – T. and G. Gracchus* (Flacelière and Chambry (1979) 134). It is apparently for their striking interdependence and intertwining that these two *Lives* are treated as a “pair” in the Lamprias Catalogue (they are exceptionally listed among the *Moralia* as nos. 25 and 26 by Planudes) and appear consecutively in the manuscript tradition with no mark of separation between them (Ziegler (1973) xiv–xv; Manfredini (1987) 1001–1043, (1988) 103–122, and (1990) 9–20). Also, the fact that the *Galba* and *Otho* appeared among the *Moralia* in the thirteenth- to fourteenth-century *recensio Planudea* and in the 1572 *editio* by Henricus Stephanus, while only in later editions were they placed after the *Parallel Lives* (cf. the Juntine (1517), the Aldine (1519), Bryan’s (1724), Reiske’s (1774), Coraes’ (1809), Sintenis’ (1839–1846), Teubner’s (1852–1854), and Bekker’s (1855–1857)), confirms the earlier editors’ difficulty in assigning a proper place to these two biographies within the Plutarchan corpus (Giannattasio (2000) 82). It is obvious that they were viewed as “different” from the *Parallel Lives*.

In the *Caesars*, Plutarch is not interested in the totality of the emperors’ life, in the details before it or after it, as he is in the *Parallel Lives*, or as Suetonius is in the *De vita Caesarum*; no doubt, the choice of the sequential structure makes it easier for him to abide by this format. Either *Life* stretches backwards and forward: the *Galba* begins with a summary of the events preceding and surrounding Nero’s deposition and death (2, 4–7; 19.3–9). There is no description of Galba’s adult life and only sparing use of anecdotal material or sayings illustrating his personality (16.1–2: Suet. *Galb.* 12.3; 15.5: Suet. *Galb.* 12.2; 18.4–5: Suet. *Galb.* 16.1; 26.3: Suet. *Galb.* 19.2), unlike Suetonius, who is avid for such details (*Galb.* 3.4, 4.1–2, 6.2, 7.2, 9.1, 13, 20.2). Furthermore, there is barely a flicker of interest in Galba’s family and career before his rebellion against Nero in April

68 (3.3–5, 19.1). Could it be that some of this material was included in the lost *Nero*? Possibly, since the *Nero* (and the *Vitellius*) clearly extends beyond its immediate confines.

The same obtains in the *Otho*. Otho is introduced at *Galba* 19.2 with a lengthy account of his character, followed by a spicy story about the Otho–Poppaea–Nero *ménage à trois*, his early career under Nero, his joining Galba’s rebellion, and the intended marriage with Vinius’ daughter (21–23). Otho reappears steadily at *Galba* 24.4 and 26.4, while at 28.1, following Galba’s death, we are informed of his proclamation as emperor by the senate and its oath of loyalty to him. The transition from the end of the *Galba* to the *Otho* is made smoothly with the story of imperial succession running on “seamlessly” without any introduction of the sort that we have encountered in the *Galba* (Bowersock (1998) 204); clearly, the proem to *Galba* covered the needs of both lives. In the same vein, the account of Vitellius’ impending proclamation as emperor which features at *Otho* 18.4–7 would lead the way unobtrusively to the *Vitellius* (cf. *ta men oun alla ... lechthēnai*, “the rest of the story ... will be told,” 18.1, is thought to refer to the lost *Life*, Flacelière and Chambry (1979) 205 n. 1, 218). Moreover, various bits of information on Vitellius’ pre-imperial and imperial career have made their way into both *Lives*, with the *Galba* hosting a smaller number of such incidents (22.7–9, 12, 23.1, 27.10) than the *Otho* (4.1–6, 5.1–3, 6.2–5, 8.2, 9.5, 12.1–2, 16.2, 17.12, 18.4). The lost *Vitellius* would probably have taken up the story of the emperor’s reign without a break.

Plutarch’s disinclination to repeat any information that he has already covered in either *Life* (note one exception on Otho’s profligacy at *Galb.* 19.2, 21.3, and at *Oth.* 9.5; also *bōsper eirētai*, “as I have already mentioned,” *Galb.* 2.1, where Plutarch is compelled to remind the reader of Nymphidius Sabinus) should be linked with the limited time frame of the events recounted in the *Lives*. The contracted time span and the fact that neither Galba nor Otho were of particular interest in their own right determine, apparently, the lack of a holistic approach in *Galba* and *Otho* as well as the overall different way of structuring these two biographies.

Plutarch may owe much of his conceptual framework in the imperial biographies to earlier monographs on “series” of rulers, which existed from Hellenistic times, such as the Peripatetic Pha(i)nias of Eresos’ work on the Sicilian tyrants (*Peri tōn en Sikelia turannōn*, “On the Sicilian tyrants,” Duff (1999) 20); but we have no indication of the exact nature of this monograph. Plutarch must have been familiar with the Peripatetic’s works, for he mentions him several times in *Solon* and *Themistocles*, but does not tell us that he wrote a biography of Solon or of Themistocles. Again, we have no way of establishing that Pha(i)nias wrote any biographies at all (Momigliano (1993) 78), nor can we venture a guess as to what sort of biographies, if any, he would have included in his work on the Sicilian tyrants. Moreover, a papyrus fragment (*P. Haun.* 6, ed. T. Larsen (1942) 37–45) containing short prosopographical sketches of third-century BCE Ptolemies within the framework of a genealogical tree may point to a work combining genealogy and biography or to a list (*pinax*) of members of the Ptolemaic dynasty with brief historical information about them (Momigliano (1993) 115; Gallo (1975) 57–105). Finally, the possibility that Plutarch may have been inspired by the sequential methods of the Hellenistic philosophical *diadochai* (on which see Mejer (1978) 62–74) should not be ruled out.

The lacunae of our knowledge about Hellenistic biography make it impossible to establish with any certainty the very existence of sequential biographies (and even less

their format and content) of rulers before the Roman principate. It can thus be conceded that Plutarch and Suetonius first came up with the idea of biographies linked in a series independently, the former in Greek and the latter in Latin, without showing any sign of mutual influence or regard. Plutarch appears then to be treading novel ground once with the *Caesars* (although even within the imperial series he makes room for variation; on Plutarch's different approach in the *Augustus*, see Ash (1997) 190–191) and a second time with the comparison of Greeks and Romans in the *Parallel Lives* (Syme (1980) 105; Bowersock (1998) 194–195).

6. Emphases

Philosophical Implications

Despite the use of a common source, Plutarch has introduced his own emphases into the narrative of the two imperial *Lives* (Keitel (1995) 277, 284; Ash (1997) 202–204). His personal interest in philosophy is evident from the proem of *Galba*, where in the midst of a cluster of *chreiai* (the only other comparable accumulation of *chreiai* in a *Life*'s prologue is found in the *Pelopidas* 1–2.8) he mentions Plato's reflections on the synergy between rulers and soldiers and the latter's training through reason and philosophy. Plato's words strategically direct the audience to read the events of 68–69 within a philosophical context. Although the philosopher's position does not correspond exactly to a Platonic passage, Plutarch may be thinking of the “guardians” of the ideal state in *Republic* Books II (375c–376c), III (410d–e, 411e–412a), and IV (442b–c), who should have “passion of spirit” and “philosophic temper,” receive mental and physical education, and obey the instructions of the “philosopher” rulers. Plato's remarks on the qualities of a good “guardian” set out then the criteria by which the two emperors (and the armies) will be judged (Keitel (1995) 276, 284). Despite Galba's and Otho's different qualities and approaches, neither of them showed the character shaped by philosophic training demanded by Plato of his guardians, while they were both overwhelmed by the uncontrolled violence of the armies which had “given over to untrained (*apaideutois*) and irrational (*alogois*) impulses” (*Galb.* 1.4). Plutarch explores the tension between destructive armies and ineffectual commanders throughout the two *Lives*, and it is this gulf between individual and collective that offers itself as a meaningful interpretative template of the *Galba* and *Otho*. Furthermore, keeping in line with the philosophical framework, Plutarch sets the battle of Vesontio (*Galb.* 6.4) in a Platonic cast. He evokes the Phaedran chariot imagery (253c ff.) in order to draw a contrast between the Platonic ideal of rational control of the emotions and the conduct of the troops and commanders (Stadter (2005) 423), but reverses the Platonic simile in the *Galba* by having the charioteers, Verginius and Vindex, completely lose control over the reins. This loss of control points not only to the ruinous force of the army but also to the inefficiency and helplessness of its leaders; even those commanders who seem to be able to lead this particular “chariot” of collective force for a short period of time are seen to be destroyed (Vindex, Nymphidius Sabinus, and Sempronius Densus), or fail (Marius Celsus, Suetonius Paulinus) despite their best efforts (Ash (1997) 192–194).

Deaths and the Symbolism of Decapitation

Kill! Kill!

*I saw him now, weighed down by death,
sink to the ground, although his eyes were bent...*

(Purgatorio, Canto XV.108–110)

No reader of the two *Lives* can fail to be struck by the unusual description of brutal death scenes, especially in the *Galba*. Plutarch (or perhaps the common source) exhibits here a distinct penchant for brutal deaths and their description, which resonates of course with the broader historical context of the civil wars of 68–69 within which the *Galba* and *Otho* are situated. Also, by stressing the uncontrollable violence of the soldiers against their commanders he makes his initial observation about “the untrained and irrational impulses” of the military force more conspicuous. Suetonius, by contrast, tends to omit the death of secondary characters, while Tacitus provides lengthy accounts of deaths of major characters (Ash (1997) 195–196).

The reigns of Galba and Otho (also that of Vitellius) begin and end with a death – Galba assumes the imperial power after Nero has been murdered, Otho after Galba has been brutally killed, and Vitellius after Otho has committed suicide – and so do the *Lives*: the *Galba* begins with the death of Nero (the death of Galba is also proleptically anticipated, 2.3) and ends with that of Galba (27.1–4), whereas the *Otho* begins with the death of Tigellinus (2.3–4) and ends with that of Otho (17). The entire narrative is punctuated by a relentless succession of gruesome death scenes: Vindex commits suicide after his troops were defeated at Vesontio (*heauton anelontos*, *Galb.* 6.4), Spiculus and Aponius are tortured to death (*Galb.* 8.7), Nymphidius Sabinus is slaughtered (*sphattetai*) by furious soldiers whilst he attempts to be proclaimed emperor (*Galb.* 14.10), five other distinguished fellow-conspirators of Sabinus are executed without a trial (*Galb.* 15.1–3), Sempronius Densus dies (*epese*) while trying to restrain the soldiers from attacking Galba (*Galb.* 26.8–10), Galba is murdered (*apesphaxe*) and then decapitated (*apokopsonta tēn kephalēn*) by Fabius Fabulus (*Galb.* 27.1–4), Piso, Galba’s intended heir to the throne, is slain and beheaded on Otho’s orders (*Galb.* 27.6), as are Vinus and Laco (*Galb.* 27.7–8), Tigellinus prefers to slit his own throat (*heauton elaimotomēsen*) than be executed (*Oth.* 2.3), Orfidius, the commander of the Othonian legion is slain (*ekteinan*) by the Vitellians at the battle of Bedriacum (*O.* 12.6), and finally Otho kills himself in despair (*Oth.* 17). A more cruel death awaits Otho’s successor, Vitellius; the latter’s demise, which is implicitly foreshadowed at *Otho* 17.12 and is dramatically recounted by Suetonius (*Vit.* 17), would have been recounted by Plutarch in the lost *Vitellius*.

The notion of “head” and “body” and, more specifically, the physical images of “severed heads” and “mutilated bodies” contribute emphatically to the imagery of death mentioned previously. Ancient writers have often flirted with this idea in military contexts (cf. Livy 5.46.5–6, 6.3.1; Silius Italicus 10.309–311; Tac. *Ann.* 1.13.4), while the association between real and metaphorical heads seems to have found its finest expression in Livy (1.55.5; Ash (1997) 197). In the proem to *Galba*, Plutarch assimilates the army to a strong and healthy human body (*errōmenon sōma*, 1.1) and further on expands this idea by introducing the notion of the leader or general as being the “head” (*kephalēn*, 4.5; the same image is used in *Pel.* 2.1) to that “body” (i.e. the army). He lays stress on the fact that

although the armies are in want of a head to balance their “headless” body and become whole again, they (i.e. the soldiers) are incapable of sustaining any “head” they might find. Perhaps the most decisive moment is to be found at *Galba* 27.5–8, when the physical severed heads of Galba, Piso, Vinus, and Laco, who had all tried to become a metaphorical “head” to the army, are presented on the “tragic stage.” Stadter, in particular, notices that in the *Galba* “the unity of head and body, rational intellect and responsive flesh, guiding emperor and willing citizen-soldiers is destroyed: in its place we find headless bodies, and body-less heads.” Ash, on the other hand, has pursued the decapitation theme a bit further by pointing to matters of structure (the *Otho* is structurally “acephalous” due to its lack of distinct opening) and content, as the pile of “headless” bodies surrounding Otho are indistinguishable from one another (Stadter (2005) 424; Ash (1997) 198–199).

Interestingly, however, the decapitation scenes are not found in the “acephalous” *Otho* but in the *Galba*, which structurally speaking has both a “head” (note its lengthy preface, 1–2) and “feet” (cf. Arist. *Poet.* 1450b, on the wholeness of the well-made plot) lacking the *fragmentation* of the *Otho*. Galba’s decapitation serves as a symbolic representation of the emperor’s powerlessness and “headlessness” throughout his short reign. In *Galba* 4.6 Vindex invites Galba to assume the imperial power in order to provide a *kephalē* to an *ischuron sōma* (“a head” ... “vigorous body”); although Galba was expected to act as a “leader,” he lacked the courage and aggressiveness that Plato demanded from his commanders. He showed ambivalence in taking decisive actions and he soon entrusted control of his affairs to his “loyal” associates, falling completely under the control of Titus Vinus, the praetorian prefect, and others (*Galb.* 7.5–6, 11.3–4). In that sense Galba ruled as a “headless” *princeps* – his decapitation was both real and metaphorical – while the troops were the true rulers, the “heads,” even if they could not control themselves.

Tragedy and Bacchic Imagery

Attention should also be drawn to Plutarch’s emphasis on the irrational and his use of Bacchic imagery in the description of Galba’s death (Ash (1997) 200–201). The dramatic description of Fabius Fabulus running around through the roads of Rome like a bacchant and parading Galba’s head *prosōpon* (it can mean “mask” in drama) impaled on his blood-dripping spear clearly evokes tragedy and Plutarch’s sustained interest in the notion of spectatorship. This Dionysiac scene can be properly linked with the dramatic image of the army, in the proem to *Galba* 1.8, “whisking tragic tyrants on and off stage.” The use of Dionysiac vocabulary to describe moments of collective madness or extreme sorrow underpins other sections of the narrative as well, as is the case with beating to death and “tearing in pieces” any follower of Nero (note the evocative use of *diespasan*, *Galb.* 8.7), or of Antonius Honoratus, who is reviling his soldiers for being driven by an “evil demon” (*Galb.* 14.2; cf. also *Oth.* 1.5), or Otho’s soldiers, who are possessed by a “frenzied passion” for being ruled and commanded by Otho (*Oth.* 17.11).

Synkrisis

The use of the comparative method (*synkrisis*), which constitutes a major compositional feature in the *Parallel Lives*, is amply attested in the two imperial *Lives* (on *synkrisis* in general see Larmour). The majority of “internal” comparisons are traced in the

Galba – where the emphasis on the characters’ *ēthos* (character) is more pronounced – and less in the *Otho*, which is richer in military events, although comparisons relating to Otho are also interspersed in the *Galba*: Galba (his personality or policies) is contrasted with Nero (*Galb.* 8.8, 14.3–5, 15.2, 16.1,3, 18.3, 29.5), Vinius (*Galb.* 16.4), Flaccus Hordeonius and Vitellius (*Galb.* 22.7), Scipio, Fabricius, and Camillus (*Galb.* 29.4), and to the men who had conspired against Nero (*Galb.* 29.5). Otho, on the other hand, is compared to Nero (*Galb.* 19.4; *Oth.* 18.3), Vinius (*Galb.* 20.5), Piso (*Galb.* 23.5), Vitellius (*Oth.* 9.5) and, lastly, to Cato and Scipio (*Oth.* 13.4). Yet, the most remarkable aspect of this syncritical device is, perhaps, Plutarch’s use of an informal “epilogic” *synkrisis* in the final chapters of both *Lives* (*Galb.* 29; *Oth.* 18.3); these sections, which blend tightly with the rest of the narrative, make up for the absence of the formal *synkrisis*, which is often appended to the pairs in the *Parallel Lives* and help to bring out the continuity of both *Lives*: the two emperors’ reigns are compared to Nero’s in both epilogues. This motif coheres with the recurring comparisons in the rest of the narrative in which Nero hovers around on more than one occasion (see also section 5). In some ways then, these sections anticipate the autonomous *synkrisis* of the later *Parallel Lives*. So it turns out that Plutarch gradually introduces a narrative feature that would become standard in his paired biographies (Georgiadou (1988) 352–353). And what is more, the formula in the opening sentence of the epilogue to *Galba* (*toiauta ta kata ton Galban*, “such was the fate of Galba”) echoes verbally the final notice found in several *Parallel Lives*. This distinctive way of concluding a life usually marks the first *Life* of the dyad (and only rarely the second, *Aem. Paul.* 39.11) and provides a jumping-off point to the second *Life* (*Philop.* 21.12; *Cim.* 19.5; *Lyc.* 31.5; *Lys.* 30.5). The case of the two imperial *Lives* is no different, for in various ways and despite the diversity of content and structure between the *Caesars* and the *Parallel Lives*, the *Galba* and *Otho*, one may argue, were loosely conceived to be read as a pair.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A comprehensive study of Plutarch's *Caesars* still remains a *desideratum*. The work of Hardy (1890) is still essential, though now rather dated; it remains an indispensable repository of information for the short period of the two emperors' reigns (lx–cxi). There is much of value in

the chapters on “Plutarch and Tacitus” (ix–lv), “Suetonius and Dio Cassius” (lvi–lx), and the “Manuscripts and Previous Editions containing Galba and Otho” (cxi–cxxiii). Among recent discussions Pelling’s engaging Introduction to the two imperial *Lives* (Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010) 415–428) stands out with valuable insights on the intersection between Plutarch and Tacitus. The short commentary on the *Caesars* by Little and Ehrhardt (2008) targets a wide audience; it provides, along with the translation and a short chapter on notes, a brief overview of the ongoing debate on the date and sources (3–5). Among recent publications the following articles bear on various aspects of the imperial *Lives*: Jones ((1971) 72–80) discusses the dating of the *Caesars* and addresses the complex problem of Plutarch’s and Tacitus’ sources; the issue of the sources is reexamined by Syme ((1980) 104–110), while Geiger ((2002) 93–102) and Stadter ((2005) 428–432) revisit with valuable insights the problematic subject of the dating of the *Lives*. Georgiadou ((1988) 349–356) explores the proem to the *Galba* in relation to prologues in the later *Parallel Lives* and draws attention to the interlocking themes in the two *Lives*. Giannattasio ((2000) 81–91) explores acutely the middle ground occupied by the two imperial biographies, which oscillate between biography and history; Keitel ((1995) 275–288) and Ash ((1997) 189–214) offer a perceptive discussion of the philosophical framework of the *Lives* and demonstrate that despite the use of a common source by Suetonius, Tacitus, and Plutarch, the latter has introduced his own motifs into the narrative of the two emperors. Braun ((1992) 95, 101) points to the different characterization of the two emperors by Suetonius and Plutarch and attributes the various discrepancies to the two writers’ diverse biographical scheme, with the former interested more in Galba and Otho as individuals, as players in the narrative, and the latter in the external forces to which they both fell prey. Finally, for a meticulous account of the turbulent year 69 CE, see Wellesley (2000).

CHAPTER 18

Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho*

Lukas de Blois

1. Introduction

Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho* are the only two of his imperial biographies that are still extant.¹ They may have been written earlier than the *Parallel Lives*² and should be read as one narrative. Some differences between *Galba* and *Otho* and similar stories in the *Parallel Lives* may be expected. Generally Plutarch's *Lives of the Caesars* seem to have been closer to history than the *Bioi Paralleloioi*.³ In *Galba* 2.3 Plutarch says that the accurate and circumstantial narration of events belongs to formal history, but that it is his duty not to omit such incidents as are worthy of mention in the deeds and fates of the Caesars. In this way he is leaning a little bit more to historiography than in his *Alexander* 1.2, where he says:

It is not *Histories* that I am writing, but *Lives*; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities.

In the opening lines of his *Galba*, Plutarch gives us the main theme of *Galba* and *Otho*, which is the escalation of military misconduct in times of diminished or missing leadership. In *Galba* 1.1–3 Plutarch tells us:

Iphicrates the Athenian used to think that the mercenary soldier might well be fond of wealth and fond of pleasure, in order that his quest for the means to gratify his desires might lead him to fight with greater recklessness; but most people think that a body of soldiers, just like a natural body in full vigour, ought to have no initiative of its own, but should follow

that of its commander. Wherefore Paullus Aemilius, as we are told, finding that the army which he had taken over in Macedonia was infected with loquacity and meddlesomeness, as though they were all generals, gave out word that each man was to have his hand ready and his sword sharp, but that he himself would look out for the rest. Moreover, Plato (*Resp.* 376c) sees that a good commander or general can do nothing unless his army is amenable and loyal; and he thinks that the quality of obedience, like the quality characteristic of a king, requires a noble nature and a philosophic training, which, above all things, blends harmoniously the qualities of gentleness and humanity with those of high courage and aggressiveness. Many dire events, and particularly those which befell the Romans after the death of Nero, bear witness to this, and show plainly that an empire has nothing more fearful to show than a military force given over to untrained and unreasoning impulses.

Unlike Tacitus (e.g. in *Hist.* 1.80–85), Plutarch does not present discipline as a common Roman military habit, in which all levels of command are important, and from which soldiers only deviate in times of civil strife, suspicions, uncertainties, and a lack of sound leadership. In this passage he presents military discipline as a consequence of a noble nature and philosophic training, and a result of good, steadfast leadership at the top. In the chapters following this statement, however, Plutarch nowhere reverts to Platonism or philosophy in general to explain military behavior, but he certainly elaborates his main theme, the connection between bad leadership and military misconduct.

2. Bad Leadership and Military Misconduct in Galba's Reign

In Plutarch's *Galba* the worst kind of leadership is displayed by the emperor himself and by his close assistants, men such as Vinus, Laco, and Icelus. Those second-line leaders were rapacious and acted in an arbitrary, selfish, tyrannical way. In practically all literary sources Galba is reproached for giving them too much latitude, whereas he tried to reclaim Nero's gifts from the many who had received them – except 10 percent, which they were allowed to keep. Besides, Galba punished Nero's creatures in a rather erratic way, killing some of them but sparing the lives of some of the most important Neronian cronies, men such as Tigellinus, who – according to Plutarch (*Galb.* 17.2) – had earned Vinus' protection. In contrast he organized the murder of Clodius Macer, a usurper in the province of Africa, but also of Fonteius Capito, commander of one of the Rhine armies, which may have raised suspicions among other military leaders.⁴

Much to his own detriment Galba tried to be an example of old-fashioned *severitas* toward the soldiers. In Plutarch's *Galba* the praetorians in Rome become – in reaction to bad leadership at the top and at the second level – ever more unruly. In *Galba* 2.1 Plutarch tells us that the praetorian prefect Nymphidius Sabinus, who is depicted as a very bad character and a depraved leader, had to *convince* his soldiers to opt for Galba and act against their oath. He promises the soldiers an impossibly high donative. Plutarch observes:

It was Nymphidius Sabinus, prefect of the court guard along with Tigellinus ... who, when Nero's case was altogether desperate, and it was clear that he was going to run away to Egypt, persuaded the soldiery, as though Nero were no longer there but had already fled, to proclaim Galba emperor, and promised as largess seventy-five hundred drachmas

[amounting to about 7,500 *denarii*] apiece for the court, or praetorian, guards, as they were called, and twelve hundred and fifty drachmas for those in service outside of Rome, a sum which it was impossible to raise without inflicting ten thousand times more evils upon the world than those inflicted by Nero. This promise was at once the death of Nero, and soon afterwards of Galba: the one the soldiers abandoned to his fate in order to get their reward, the other they killed because they did not get it. (Plut. *Galb.* 2.1–3)

At first sight this passage seems to give us a fine example of proverbial military greed, but the soldiers do not make their choice of their own initiative. They are fairly loyal to their oaths and are only led on by bad leaders, as is also described by other literary sources, for example by Tacitus, *Histories* 1.5.1, where this author says that the soldiers of the praetorian guard who had through their oaths internalized loyalty to the emperors were instigated and manipulated into deserting Nero, more so than that they were prepared to do this on their own initiative.

Furthermore, even if Nymphidius' promises had been impossibly high, they had created a justified claim, which, incidentally, not all praetorians were prepared to cash in and realize at all costs. In the fairly personal comment quoted above, *Galba* 2.3, Plutarch says that this promise was at once the death of Nero and soon afterwards of Galba, the soldiers abandoning the one to his fate in order to get their reward, and killing the other because they did not receive it. In *Galba* 18.2 and 23.2–3 the author briefly reverts to this issue. In 18.2, he comments that many soldiers would have been satisfied to receive at least a reasonable portion of the promised largess, for example as much as Nero had promised, but that Galba did not give it to them, saying that it was his custom to enroll soldiers, not to buy them, whereupon the military started to nurture a dire and savage hatred toward him. This is a good example of escalation of a conflict through bad leadership. This remark of Galba's is also mentioned by Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.5.2), Suetonius (*Galb.* 16.1), and Cassius Dio (64.3.3). It must have become a famous dictum by the time they wrote their works. In Plutarch's view, Galba's meanness was the more incomprehensible because he was extremely rich. In *Galba* 3.1 the author tells us that Sulpicius Galba was the richest private person who ever came to the imperial throne.

Galba was not only niggardly toward the praetorian guard and all other troops, he also treated some military units in a cruel way, for example fleet soldiers who had been promoted to legionary status by Nero and who were still stationed in the neighborhood of Rome. They had a justified claim to make and went out to meet Galba when he was approaching Rome, entreating him to guarantee them their new status. Plutarch tells us:

Moreover, when, in his approach to the city, he [= Galba] was distant from it about five-and-twenty furlongs, he fell in with a disorderly and tumultuous crowd of seamen, who beset his way and encompassed him on all sides. These were men whom Nero had formed into a legion and given the title of soldiers (*stratiôtai*). And now they were there to enforce their just rights as soldiers, and would not suffer the emperor to be seen or heard by those who came to meet him, but with tumultuous shouts demanded standards for their legion and regular quarters. When Galba put off their demand and told them to renew it another time, they declared that the postponement was merely a way of refusing their demands, and were incensed, and followed along with unremitted shouts. Some actually drew their swords, and then Galba ordered his horsemen to charge upon them. (*Galb.* 15.3–4)

This led to a massacre among the fleet soldiers. Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.6.2) and Suetonius (*Galb.* 12.2) give similar stories. In *Histories* 7.1 Tacitus adds that this undeserved and untimely massacre coincided with messages about the killing of Clodius Macer and Fonteius Capito, mentioned above, which undoubtedly strongly increased negative feelings toward Galba. Plutarch does not give us this important detail. In *Galba* 12.2 Suetonius tells us that Galba dispersed the fleet soldiers by a cavalry charge and had them decimated subsequently. In the same paragraph Suetonius narrates that Galba also disbanded a cohort of Germans, whom the previous Caesars had made their bodyguards and had found absolutely faithful in many emergencies (Suet. *Galb.* 12.2). According to Pierre Cosme (2012), these bodyguards were Batavians and the mistreatment they received contributed to the Batavian uprising that was soon to break out. Cassius Dio tells a comparable story about Nero's bodyguards, and rather contentedly observes that Galba had 7,000 of them killed (Cassius Dio 64.3.1–2), but in all of his eighty books Cassius Dio is virtually obsessed with the risks of military power and misconduct and is always satisfied with examples of *severitas* toward soldiers.⁵

In any case, very soon after Galba's arrival in Rome, the praetorians started to have second thoughts about this ruler on account of his meanness, his unwarranted severity toward the military – especially in view of his leniency toward many other people who did not deserve such treatment – and the behavior of his assistants. Their commander, Nymphidius Sabinus, who was very disappointed by Galba's appointment policies and had begun to think that Galba was about to eliminate him, was already trying to become emperor himself. He seemed to be successful in stirring up his troops in their camp, and the praetorians were already wavering in their loyalty to Galba when – according to Plutarch, *Galba* 14.1–3 – a third-rank leader, the military tribune Antonius Honoratus, appeased the angry praetorians, which may be interpreted as a sign of failing leadership at higher levels. Honoratus rebuked the praetorians because they were on the verge of betraying one emperor after the other, Galba after Nero, and were breaking their oaths of allegiance in rapid succession. In this passage the soldiers are not utterly depraved but accessible to morally sound reasoning, even if it comes from a lower officer who lacks the support of his commander. They killed Nymphidius. However, the danger was not gone. As Plutarch observes,

the agitation at Rome was still smoldering, and at the same time a certain respect for Galba's presence blunted and delayed the spirit of revolution, and the absence of any manifest occasion for a change repressed and kept under cover, somehow or other, the resentment of the soldiers. (*Galb.* 18.3)

The resentment of the praetorian guard and probably other military units against the emperor soon rose to the point of violence and rebellion. Instrumental in this change for the worse must have been an essential detail that Plutarch leaves out. He does not mention that Galba caused some panic among the praetorians and other units that were serving in Rome by discharging a few military tribunes. Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.20.3) tells us that a few military tribunes were discharged, not only in the praetorian guard but also among the *vigiles* and the urban cohorts, which caused fright and annoyance among other military men. This was a bad mistake. Any usurper, eventually Otho as well as Vitellius, could now find adherents among the military middle cadre. As a matter of fact,

Plutarch more often neglects the military middle cadre, in other historical contexts as well. Concentrating on leadership at the top, he pays less attention than, for example, Tacitus to tensions between soldiers and the military middle cadre that may have contributed to the outbreak of conflicts in Rome in 68–69 CE.⁶

Galba's worst mistakes had to do with the upper Rhine army and with the succession. First of all, Galba utterly neglected the threatening situation in Germania Superior. In 67 CE the army of this region, under the command of Verginius Rufus, had annihilated the forces of the Gallic usurper Vindex, with whom Galba had sympathized. Verginius and his army had stood by their oaths of loyalty toward the reigning emperor, Nero (Wiedemann (1996) 256–261). On top of the grievances that were common among all armies, such as annoyance over the emperor's unwarranted meanness and vexation about the behavior of his assistants, the army of the upper Rhine felt cheated of the reward for its services against the Gauls and Vindex, saw its victorious commander Verginius Rufus disappear in a rather dishonorable way, and loathed its new commander, Hordeonius Flaccus. Furthermore, the soldiers of this army now saw that their enemies of a year before, Vindex's Gauls, were honored by Galba, Vindex's former ally, for example through grants of citizenship and remissions of tribute (Plut. *Galb.* 18.1, 22.1–2. Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 1.51 and Suet. *Galb.* 16.2). Coins issued in 68 CE, bearing the legend *Concordia Hispaniarum et Galliarum* on the obverse and the words *Victoria p.R.* on the reverse, seem to suggest that the annoyance of the upper Rhine soldiers was not out of place. This had been Vindex's hope.⁷

In *Galba* 10.1–2 Plutarch tells us that Galba was anxious about the attitude of Verginius Rufus, who was commanding a large and efficient army and had the added prestige of his victory. After Nero's demise Verginius' soldiers wanted him to be their emperor, but he did not give in to their wishes. In *Galba* 10.3 Plutarch says:

But after Fabius Valens, commander of a legion, had led off in taking the oath of allegiance to Galba, and letters had come from Rome telling of the senate's decrees [i.e. to make Galba emperor], he succeeded at last, though with the greatest difficulty, in persuading his soldiers to declare Galba emperor; and when Galba sent Flaccus Hordeonius to succeed him, Verginius received that officer and handed over his army to him.

The highest leader, Verginius, is hesitant and does not take firm decisions at the right moment, thereby giving the soldiery too much latitude, and so a leader of the second rank, Valens, has a hard time getting things right.⁸ In the Verginius story leaders come off much worse than the soldiers, who stick to their oaths and only begin to think about a new emperor when it has become clear that Nero is no longer their ruler. Plutarch does not deviate from historical tradition in order to depict the soldiers more negatively than they deserved.

Verginius' successor in Germania Superior, Hordeonius Flaccus, is also depicted as a weak leader: too old and too sick (Tac. *Hist.* 1.9.1). Without the backing of his authority, his officers – in this case military tribunes and centurions, i.e. third-rank leaders – could not appease their soldiers when the latter were demanding the donative that had been promised to them (Plut. *Galb.* 18.3–4; cf. Suet. *Galb.* 16.2). In *Galba* 18.4 Plutarch tells us:

Of Flaccus himself, who was physically incapacitated by an acute gout, and inexperienced in the conduct of affairs, they [i.e. the soldiers of Flaccus' army] made no account whatever. And once at a spectacle, when the military tribunes and centurions, after the Roman custom,

invoked health and happiness upon the emperor Galba, the mass of the soldiery raised a storm of dissent at first, and then, when the officers persisted in their invocation, cried out in response, “if he deserves it.”

According to Plutarch (*Galb.* 22–23), the behavior of the soldiers of the upper Rhine army escalated to unmanageable heights at the beginning of the new year, 69 CE. At the Calends of January they refused to take the customary oath to the emperor, overturned Galba’s statues, and swore allegiance to the senate and the people of Rome. Plutarch tells us that then their officers – the third line of leadership, which had been positively loyal and effectively leading the troops so far – began to fear that their lawless spirit might issue in revolt and started to go along with the soldiers. In the end this resulted in usurpation of the imperial purple by Vitellius. Thus bad leadership at top levels resulted in an escalation of military misbehavior and in outright usurpation. Third-level leaders could no longer repair the situation.

A decisive factor in Galba’s rapid demise was his choice of a successor. As soon as he heard about the rebellious attitude of the army of the upper Rhine, Galba, who was childless and thought that the lack of dynastic continuity undermined his position, decided to adopt a successor. Instead of opting for someone who was popular among the soldiery and an experienced administrator, he chose Piso, a man of impeccable lineage and of a reputedly even more impeccable character, but a nonentity in politics and among the armies. To make matters worse, Galba even on this occasion refused to give the soldiers a handsome donative. These two blunders immediately led to Otho’s coup and Galba’s death.⁹ The latter now also lost the support of much of the middle cadre of the praetorian guard. In *Galba* 24.1 Plutarch describes how an *optio* and a *tesserarius*, men from the lower military cadre between soldiers and centurions, who had gone over to Otho, together with one of the latter’s freedmen, called Onomastus, corrupted groups of soldiers with money and material promises. Suetonius does not mention such activities by military cadres, but Tacitus does (*Hist.* 1.24–25), so Plutarch does not give us complete fiction here.

3. More Bad Leadership and Military Misbehavior: The Reign of Otho

Otho was not really a better leader than Galba had been. In *Otho* 3.2 Plutarch tells us that the new emperor placed his government on a sound basis, but the soldiers made themselves troublesome by urging him not to trust the influential citizens. The word that Plutarch uses to denote the soldiers, *misthophoroi* (“paid soldiers”), suggests something like mercenaries, whose loyalty is determined by the money they receive and nothing else. In *Otho* 5.3 Plutarch speaks of the disorderly and arrogant spirit of the soldiers, their *ataxia* and *thrasutês*. Otho did not behave as a good, strong leader would have done and failed to overcome these problems. If we take into account the number of lines or chapters dedicated to different events of Otho’s reign, the latter’s best act seems to have been his impressive suicide.¹⁰

However, there is one exception. In *Otho* 3.3–8 Plutarch, like Tacitus in *Historiae* 1.80–85, pays a good deal of attention to a story about the disruption of a formal dinner

at the Othonian court in Rome. They both seem to take the unfortunate event very seriously as a sign of an utter breakdown of authority and discipline, the extreme point of the escalation of military misbehavior.

In *Otho* 3.3 Plutarch tells us that in Rome soldiers of the praetorian guard became suspicious when they noticed that weapons were loaded on wagons. According to Tacitus, *Histories* 1.80.1, this was done to equip a cohort, probably one that was to participate in the war against the Vitellians. Plutarch tells us in *Otho* 3.4 that some soldiers attacked the wagons and others killed two centurions who opposed them, as well as Crispinus, the responsible higher officer. Plutarch continues:

Then the whole body, putting themselves in array and exhorting one another to go to the help of the emperor, marched to Rome. Here, learning that eighty senators were at supper with Otho, they rushed to the palace, declaring that now was a good time to take off all the emperor's enemies at one stroke. Accordingly, the city was in great commotion, expecting to be plundered at once; in the palace there were runnings to and fro; and a dire perplexity fell upon Otho. For while he had fears about the safety of his guests, he himself was an object of fear to them, and he saw that they kept their eyes fixed upon him in speechless terror, some of them having even brought their wives with them to the supper. But he sent the prefects of the guard with orders to explain matters to the soldiers and appease them, while at the same time he dismissed his guests by another door; and they barely made their escape as the soldiers, forcing their way through the guards into the great hall, asked what was become of the enemies of Caesar. In this crisis, then, Otho stood up on his couch, and after many exhortations, and entreaties, and not without plentiful tears, at last succeeded in sending them away. (*Oth.* 3.4–7)

In *Histories* 1.80–85 Tacitus gives us a similar story about this disruption of an imperial banquet. Suetonius (*Oth.* 8.2) and Cassius Dio (64.9.2–3) mention it more briefly. There are differences between the versions given by Tacitus and Plutarch. In the longer Tacitean version of the story more attention is paid to rumors, uncertainties, and military license and drunkenness in a climate of impending battles, tensions between soldiers and officers, contradictory feelings among the soldiers themselves, and the atmosphere of a beleaguered city within Rome. Furthermore, Tacitus' Otho comes off better than Plutarch's. He has more authority and gives a convincing speech about the social and political importance of the senate; soldiers are not to harm senators, who as a body represent Roman history and tradition, and lend legitimacy to the imperial position.

Both Tacitus and Plutarch emphasize the suspicions the soldiers had against the senators, their wish to protect Otho against a supposed senatorial conspiracy, the insolence, indiscipline, and lack of respect that soldiers showed when breaking into the palace, and the faint-hearted behavior of the senators.

Is this just a minor episode in a chaotic year, the year of the four emperors, which was full of usurpations, civil strife, killing, and plundering? Why does Plutarch elaborately give us this dinner story, in this very short biography of Otho, when he could have opted for seemingly more important things, such as heroic episodes in battles and sieges, or political upheavals? In the author's view, this episode apparently was more than a trivial detail. This should not come as a surprise to us. Banquets were of great consequence in Roman social life; they gave the rich and powerful opportunities to show off, to trumpet their own standing, as John Donahue puts it (Donahue (2004) 113). The sharing of food with

lower-status people, with equals, or among large numbers was a constant feature of life of the social and cultural elite in Rome and other Roman towns, and attending dinners gave plenty of opportunities to communicate with equals, or with people of higher or lower standing, men as well as women. To Roman emperors dinners were an important means to share opinions with senators and other important people, and to show their good character. Imperial dinners were showcases of imperial *gratia* and *paideia*, and unveiled existing hierarchies within the upper layers of society.¹¹ To give dinners in the right and proper way was one of many means through which emperors could enhance their reputation; it was one of many ritualized standard practices that enabled emperors to show that they were the right persons in the right place; in other words, it could legitimize their position. Other such standard practices were sessions of the senate presided by the emperor, *adlocutiones*, *adventus*, or even better, triumphal processions, which showed the emperors' military prowess. Yet other ones were *salutationes*, receiving embassies, distributing *congiaria* or *donativa*, and attending the games at Rome.

Ritualized standard practices can be transposed to different contexts or even inverted into their reverse, in a kind of dynamic of rituals. In this way an author can attack and delegitimize a ruler by inverting the standard practices through which he usually shows his prowess, effectiveness, liberality, and culture into their negative counterparts. An example is Nero's triumphal procession after his voyage through Greece during which he won many prizes at the great Greek games. The procession was about victories in Greek games, not about successful battles and sieges. Soldiers forming a special guard, the *augustiani*, had to act as a kind of clique, which had to praise Nero's qualities as a performer at the Greek games. Nero may have staged the procession himself, thinking it would enhance his reputation as a cultured and educated ruler, but if this was the case it completely backfired, for this triumphal procession is utterly condemned by the literary sources in which it is described, which must echo upper-class feelings in Rome (Suet. *Ner.* 25–26; Cassius Dio 63.8–9). In *Nero* 25.1 Suetonius tells us:

... but at Rome he [= Nero] rode in the chariot which Augustus had used in his triumphs in days gone by, and wore a purple robe and a Greek cloak adorned with stars of gold, bearing on his head the Olympic crown, and in his right hand the Pythian, while the rest were carried before him with inscriptions telling where he had won them and against what competitors, and giving the titles of the songs or the subject of the plays. His car was followed by his clique and by the escort of a triumphal procession, who shouted that they were the attendants of Augustus and the soldiers of his triumphs.

Just one other example. The author of the *Historia Augusta*, who clearly wished to give an utterly negative image of the emperor Elagabalus, whom he calls Heliogabalus, portrays him giving an *adlocutio* to the prostitutes of Rome instead of to the military (SHA *Heliogab.* 26.3–4). *Adlocutio* was an important ritualized standard practice of emperors going to war, but instead Elagabalus is portrayed as plunging into every kind of debauchery after his oration to the prostitutes.

In their versions of the story about Otho's disrupted banquet, Tacitus and Plutarch give us another example of reversing the good effect of a legitimizing standard practice. Otho's high-status dinner with eighty senators and their ladies was disturbed by soldiers who felt distrustful of the senators, and thought that they had to save the emperor from a senatorial conspiracy. Violating the exclusivity of the imperial dinner, in other words breaking through

an important status barrier, they inverted the positive effect of this great banquet, and thus damaged Otho's reputation. Plutarch gave this story a relatively large amount of space within his short biography of Otho, thus emphasizing how little authority the emperor really had. Tacitus' version is more nuanced and less damaging to Otho. Less so than Plutarch, he wished to show how bad leadership at the top of the empire increased military misbehavior.

4. Conclusion

In his *Galba* and *Otho* Plutarch tries to demonstrate how bad leadership at the highest levels of command caused a progressive deterioration of military discipline and a progressive worsening of military misconduct, which good officers such as military tribunes and centurions could not prevent. Quality of leadership at the highest levels was, in his view, decisive. According to Plutarch, neither Galba, nor Otho, nor Galba's assistants, nor Nymphidius and Flaccus were leaders who could react in an adroit, efficacious way to justified complaints and grievances by the praetorians and other soldiers, or to escalated military greed and misbehavior, and so the worst-case scenario developed. Plutarch describes their failure in a clever way, showing the escalation of military misconduct that unfolded over time as a consequence of bad leadership at the top and the second level of command. The third level of command, the middle cadre of military tribunes and centurions, was sound but had to give in to rebellious soldiers when leadership at the top did not improve. Incidentally, Plutarch does not neglect this level of command completely, but pays less attention to it than Tacitus does. In Plutarch's view the soldiers of the praetorian guard at first had to be persuaded by bad leaders to renounce their loyalty to the emperor, first Nero and then Galba, but increasingly hated the latter because he made one bad mistake after another, was exceptionally niggardly, and treated some military units in an unnecessarily cruel way. At the Upper Rhine, military loyalty deteriorated rapidly when Galba failed to respond to the soldiers' grievances in a clever and generous way. Galba's mistreatment of the Germanic bodyguards might even have contributed to the Batavian rebellion of 69 CE.

Plutarch does not tell us much about Otho, Galba's successor. Apparently he did not manage to restore military discipline. Within his short biography of Otho Plutarch dedicates a relatively large amount of space to an imperial dinner that was disrupted by suspicious soldiers, who did not trust the senators who were present and wished to protect the emperor against senatorial conspirators. They broke into the palace and turned the dinner, a showcase of imperial prestige, into a nightmare, showing that the new emperor had no authority to speak of. This was – in Plutarch's story – the nadir of military misconduct as a result of bad and ineffective leadership. Tacitus' more nuanced report of the same dinner shows that Plutarch purposefully elaborated the main topic of these two *bioi*, which should be read as one work, toward the bitter end at Otho's dinner, where common soldiers broke through important status barriers and degraded the image of imperial power.

NOTES

- 1 Translations of passages from Plutarch's works into English are taken from B. Perrin's Loeb editions. Much in this chapter was borrowed from de Blois (2008) and (Blois, 2009).

- 2 On the earlier date of the *Lives of the Caesars* see Jones (1971) 74 and 79; Pelling (2002) 188. On *Galba* and *Otho* as one work see Pelling (2002) 383 n. 11. See also Georgiadou.
- 3 On the “generic” closeness of *Galba* and *Otho* to history see Ash (1997) 190 f.; Duff (1999) 19 f.; Pelling (2002) 195 n. 68.
- 4 On Galba’s leniency toward his rapacious assistants and freedmen see Plut. *Galb.* 7.1–3, 11.1–2, 12.1–3, 13.1–2, 17.1–5; Tac. *Hist.* 1.6.1, 1.7.3, 1.13.1; Suet. *Galb.* 14.2 and 15.2; Cassius Dio 64.2.1–2. On the reclaiming of Nero’s gifts see Plut. *Galb.* 16.2–3; cf. Suet. *Galb.* 15.1–2; Cassius Dio 64.3.4b; Tac. *Hist.* 1.20.1–2. On the killing of Clodius Macer and Fonteius Capito see Plut. *Galb.* 15.1–2. Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 1.7.1.
- 5 Cosme (2012) 230 ff. According to Speidel (1994) 30, Galba may have done this to decrease military expenditure. On Cassius Dio’s views of the soldiery see de Blois (1998–1999) 267–281, esp. 275 ff.
- 6 See, for example, Tac. *Hist.* 1.80. The military middle cadre consisted of military tribunes, prefects of cohorts or *alae*, and centurions. They came from different layers of society, but in the Roman forces they often acted together and were seen as one group by rebellious soldiers. On the tensions between soldiers and the middle cadre, not only in 14 CE but also in 68–69, see Cosme (2012) 74 ff.
- 7 As is to be seen on a coin minted by Vindex. See McCrum and Woodhead (1966) 36, no. 26, a *denarius* from Spain, 68 CE. On the obverse busts of Spain and Gaul are facing each other, with a small figure of Victoria in between, and with the legend *Concordia Hispaniarum et Galliarum*. The reverse shows Victoria in a *biga*, holding bow and reins, with the legend *Victoria p.R.*
- 8 Verginius’ behavior is also described by other literary sources. See Tac. *Hist.* 1.8.2; Cassius Dio 63.25.1–3. In 63.25.1 Dio calls Verginius an energetic man. He comes off better in Dio’s report than in Plutarch’s.
- 9 On Piso’s adoption and its consequences see Plut. *Galb.* 23–25; Tac. *Hist.* 1.12–43; Suet. *Galb.* 17–20; Suet. *Oth.* 5.1; Cassius Dio 64.5.1 ff. Otho, disappointed that Galba had chosen Piso, now started his coup. Like Plutarch, Tacitus is positive about Piso’s character and ethics, but he takes it for granted that his adoption by Galba triggered Otho’s usurpation.
- 10 On Otho’s reign see Plut. *Oth.* 1–18; Tac. *Hist.* 1.44–47, 71–90, 2.11–56; Suet. *Oth.* 7–12; Cassius Dio 64.7–15. On Otho’s suicide see Plut. *Oth.* 16–18; Tac. *Hist.* 2.48–49; Suet. *Oth.* 10–11; Cassius Dio 64.13–15.
- 11 See Donahue (2004) 67–72; Vössing (2004) 265–539; Stein-Hölkeskamp (2005) 41–55.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

- Ash, R. (1997). "Severed Heads: Individual Portraits and Irrational Forces in Plutarch's *Galba* and *Otho*," in J. Mossman (ed.), *Plutarch and his Intellectual World*. London: 189–214.
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CHAPTER 19

The *Aratus* and the *Artaxerxes*

Eran Almagor

Aratus and Artaxerxes, an Achaean and an Achaemenid, are the heroes of two of Plutarch's extant biographies, which have been coupled together since antiquity. Like the *Lives of Galba and Otho*, discussed in the previous chapter, these biographies are not part of the *Paralleloi Bioi* project; distinct from the latter two, however, they were not part of any larger composition, and in all probability were composed and published separately.¹ The *Life* of Aratus, the eminent statesman (271–213 BCE), and the biography of the Persian king Artaxerxes (c. 433/2–359/8 BCE) are not patently connected either by way of common themes or figures,² or by verbal echoes or imagery of the sort we find in any pair of Plutarchan *Lives* or biographies associated within the same framework. They are in effect isolated works. While the *Aratus* may be grouped together with Plutarch's Greek *Lives* (and the sub-group of Hellenistic heroes),³ the *Artaxerxes* depicts a barbarian, which rules out the possibility of any other biography being coupled with it.⁴

It seems that the association of the two works was not the original plan of Plutarch, who is known to have composed individual biographies.⁵ We may even be in a position to date the actual pairing of these *Lives*. The Lamprias Catalogue, that is, the inventory list of Plutarch's volumes in a large library that was probably compiled in the early fourth century CE,⁶ testifies to the fact that the grouping of the *Aratus* and the *Artaxerxes* was relatively recent. At number 24 the catalogue lists the two as a pair. However, a *Life of Aratus* is included under a different arrangement and appears alone at number 40, like four other lost *Lives*, which apparently were not related to any particular series. Some scholars assume that this seemingly dual appearance of the same title signifies in fact two different works dedicated to two different figures, that is, the known statesman and his namesake, the Greek didactic poet (c. 315–240 BCE), author of the famous poem *Phaenomena*.⁷ Nevertheless, we have no evidence that Plutarch wrote a biography of the poet.⁸ An easier explanation for the second mention of Aratus in the catalogue would be

that the same work appeared in the collection twice, once in the original manner Plutarch intended it to be presented, i.e. as a solitary work, and once in a layout in which it was coupled with another single biography. One can imagine that the grouping of the two *Lives* together was a means to append the solitary biographies to the well-known and successful *Parallel Lives* series format by way of emulating their structure. Indeed, whoever did the pairing of these two unparalleled biographies succeeded in preserving them for future generations by this very act. The only factor determining the association of the Achaean and the Achaemenid, apart from the political resonance of the heroes (rather than poetic, philosophic, or mythic), seems to be the alphabetic ordering of the two figures' names. Undeniably, in the manuscript tradition of the pair, Aratus is always the first member.⁹ It is perhaps not surprising that these two solitary *Lives* eventually survived. From the place of the two biographies in the Lamprias Catalogue, namely, within the group of the *Paralleloi Bioi*, and just before the last pair of *Demetrius* and *Antony* (no. 25), we learn that a tradition to join the *Aratus* and the *Artaxerxes* was already in existence by this stage, alongside one that still kept the former biography separate.¹⁰ In antiquity, Plutarch was celebrated for the pairing of *Lives* (cf. Agathias, *Anth. Pal.* 16.331). Only the biographies that were thus paired subsisted.

Although the fame of Aratus was known in antiquity well before Plutarch and independently of his work,¹¹ not least due to the attention given to him by Polybius,¹² it is the *Life* that brought the statesman and general to the fore,¹³ highlighting episodes and details not transmitted by Aratus' fellow-Achaean but taken from the protagonist's own *Memoirs*. Dating the biographies or even fathoming the order in which they were written is a recognized thorny question,¹⁴ yet one should note the description of the battle of Sellasia (222/1 BCE) and its aftermath, when Cleomenes was defeated by the forces of the Achaean League and Macedon (*Arat.* 46.1) and Sparta was invaded. As compared with the elaborate depiction of the occurrences in Plutarch's *Life* of the Spartan king (*Ag.-Cleom.* 28–30.1 [49–51.1]), the *Aratus* presents only a cursory account of the events. This may indicate that the latter work is the second composition out of the two, since the *Aratus* was created as a solitary work and not part of the *Parallel Lives* and meant for separate publication.¹⁵ Yet, the *Aratus* was written before the *Philopoemen* (*Phil.* 8.6).

Bearing in mind Aratus' role in Greek affairs and the place of his age in the history of Greece, he might strike one as an obvious choice for an author seeking out heroes for his biographies, despite the admittedly scarce mention of figures from the Hellenistic period as *exempla* in second-century CE declamations and works,¹⁶ his appearance as a minor figure in the *Agis–Cleomenes* notwithstanding.¹⁷ The unique nature of his *autobiography*, and its close affinity with the genre of Plutarch's own works,¹⁸ might also make that preference understandable and appealing, as well as explicate the solitary nature of the *Life*. Ostensibly, an immediate reason for the composition is provided at the outset. The *Aratus* is dedicated to the descendants of the statesman, and even believed by scholars to have been commissioned by Polycrates,¹⁹ the explicit narratee of the work, for the instruction of his two sons (*Art.* 1.1, 1.5).²⁰ The overt significance of the *Life* is thus to provide a *paradeigma* which ties together the generations.²¹ This is, however, a known *motif*,²² and it is clear that the audience envisaged is meant to be much larger than the children mentioned.²³ Correspondingly, the *Aratus* is not a panegyric; in conformity with Plutarch's other *Lives*, it is designed to convey a rich portrait of the hero, tackling as many of his features as possible in order to examine with the readers the protagonist's merits and failings.²⁴

Given the image of Aratus as an opponent of tyrants, and in particular his clash with Cleomenes, the Spartan king who is superficially seen as trying to implement a “communist” – or even a “fascist” – agenda,²⁵ it is perhaps not surprising that the main critical studies of the figure of the Achaean hero and his biography date from the 1930s: Levi’s study on the liberation of Sicyon (1930), Walbank’s monograph (1933), and the three commentaries of Plutarch’s *Life* by Theunissen (1935; a PhD dissertation), Koster (1937), and Porter (1937). The principal issues dealt with by these and other modern scholars are the question of sources and problems of chronology²⁶ alongside certain episodes in Aratus’ career.²⁷ Opinions on Aratus and on his policies and public demeanor diverge; for some, he is seen as driven by purely selfish motives and is criticized for exercising schemes and stratagems that lack moral depth or consistency.²⁸ Conversely, several scholars commend Aratus for his heroic ideals of freedom, republicanism, and federalism or the unity of Greece.²⁹ Others consider him a pawn, compelled by necessity and governed by unforeseen circumstances, or at best an opportunist who adapts himself to given situations.³⁰ This modern variance ultimately goes back to Plutarch’s portrayal of Aratus, which seems to convey all these traits. The biographer was, evidently, dependent on his sources, and some scholars presume his inability to combine different and conflicting materials at various points.³¹ The first source, the *Memoirs* (*hypomnemata*) of Aratus in more than thirty books (Polyb. 2.40.4; *FGrH* 231), evidently supplied a self-eulogy of the statesman, or an apology for certain courses of action adopted by him³²; it presumably ended with the battle of Sellasia or at the time of the death of Antigonus Doson (about 222–221 BCE).³³ Since Polybius appreciates the style of the memories (“truthful and clearly written”: 2.40.4), while Plutarch describes them as a hasty and improvised composition (*Art.* 3.3), some scholars claim that the biographer did not use the work directly,³⁴ but it may be that Polybius is biased.³⁵ The second work consulted was the twenty-eight-volume history of Phylarchus (*FGrH* 81), now lost, covering events from Pyrrhus’ Peloponnesian campaign in 272 BCE to Cleomenes’ death in 220/19 BCE; it was censured by Polybius (2.56–63) for false accounts, for an unnecessarily sensational (and dramatic) mode of writing, and for his partiality toward Cleomenes and against Achaea.³⁶ In opposition, not only are the relevant passages in the work of Polybius, Plutarch’s third principal source,³⁷ extant, but they also give a positive portrayal of Aratus.³⁸ Polybius’ history properly begins in the 140th Olympiad (220–216 BCE) (Polyb. 1.3.1, cf. 4.2.2), and hence events prior to this date are only brought in briefly in the introductory books (the pertinent ones here are some sections of the second book (37–71) and the fourth and fifth volumes).

Corresponding to the employment of different sources and the distinct phases in Aratus’ life and career, the biography can be divided into the following sections:

1. Aratus’ early life up to the liberation of Sicyon (chs. 2–10). This is probably taken from his *Memoirs*, while the last passages are a modification of Polybius.
2. Organization of Sicyon and the Achaean League, collaboration with Ptolemy (chs. 11–15). The portrayal of Aratus’ acts with intimations of his later conduct are most probably adapted from the *Memoirs*.
3. The conquest of Corinth (chs. 16–23), Aratus’ second achievement and the zenith of his career. With the probable exception of chapter 17 (perhaps from Phylarchus) and Plutarch’s own interventions at 19 and at the end of 23, the *Memoirs* are likely to be used throughout.

4. The political and personal consequences of Corinth (chs. 24–35), which are mostly presented out of chronological order, taken from the *Memoirs*, and perhaps from Phylarchus (31–2); increasingly violent intervention (or liberation) in Argos (25–29), Megalopolis (30), Pellene (31–32), Athens (33–34), and Argos (35).
5. The Cleomenic war against Sparta (chs. 36–46); the precise extent of the use of Aratus' *Memoirs* and Phylarchus is not clear. Gradual collaboration of Aratus with Macedon and his acceptance of despotism.
6. Aratus' last years (chs. 47–54), a section that describes the Aetolian intervention and the intrigues in the Macedonian court of Philip V, to which Aratus fell victim, are mostly taken from Polybius.

Plutarch's dependence on his sources may account for the compound character of his Aratus in yet another manner. It seems to go back to Polybius' explicit characterizations of the Achaean statesman. At one point, Polybius writes (2.47.10): "[Aratus] was compelled in public both to do and say many things quite contrary to his real intention, so as to keep his design concealed by creating the exactly opposite impression," and at another point (4.7.11–8.12) he claims:

I should say a few words about Aratus owing to the singularity of his character. He had in general all the qualities that go to make a perfect man of affairs ... He also had a marvellous gift for devising ... stratagems, and ruses against the enemy, and for executing such with the utmost personal courage and endurance ... But this very same man, when he undertook field operations, was slow in conception, timid in performance, and devoid of personal courage ... So true it is that there is something multiform in the nature not only of men's bodies, but of their minds ... often in the case of such pursuits as are similar the same man may be most intelligent and most dull, or most audacious and most cowardly. Nor is this a paradox, but a fact familiar to careful observers ... I say this in order that my readers may not refuse to trust my judgement, because in some cases I make contrary pronouncements regarding the conduct of the same men even when engaged in pursuits of a like nature... (Paton's translation, slightly modified)

As Christopher Pelling ((2002) 288–291, 298 n. 24) has shown, Plutarch's portrayal in the *Life* builds upon this depiction of Aratus (cf. *Arat.* 10) yet turns the special combination of traits into a *type* of personality, while making the lesson to be drawn from this example general and ostensibly straightforward (i.e. displaying the results of the absence of proper rational education³⁹). Following Pelling's explanation ((2002) 247–249) of how moralism works in Plutarch, with the distinction he draws between the expository kind, which offers direct guidelines for conduct, and exploratory moralism, which encourages the reader to reflect on human experience and moral dilemmas and to deduce for himself the right course of action,⁴⁰ would it not be the case that the *Aratus* presents us with exploratory moralism as well? The problematic character of the Achaean statesman and his choices are seen through several *motifs* in the *Life*, which are not made explicit by the narrator, but only shown and left for the reader to decipher and infer; one might assume, therefore, that another reason for the composition of this biography would be to present readers with this complex and intriguing character.

Such, for instance, is the question of responsibility. Aratus fluctuates in Plutarch's *Life* between a reckless and emboldened hero on the one hand (3.3 [writing in haste], 4.3, 5.2; cf. 21.4, 29.3, 31.3, 47.3), and a person who often renounces all accountability on

the other, an attitude which is explicit in his response to Cleomenes (that he does not control events but is controlled by them: 41.7), and which can be found throughout the biography.⁴¹ Aratus' celebrated conversion from being an ardent opponent of tyrants in his early career to a pro-Macedonian partisan in later life is interestingly anticipated in the work by an inner conflict between the anti-tyrannical traits of Aratus (3.1, 10.1, 13.3, 26.4, 28.6) and disturbing signs of a despotic demeanor (24.1–3, 25.1, 25.5, 28.1, 28.6, 29.1–2, 33.3, 34.4, 40.2, 41.1). Indeed, the recurrent mention of statues (3.2, 14.3, 32.2–3), pictures (13, 15.3), shadows (10.4, 21.5, 22.1–2, 10) and theaters (8.6, 17.4, 23.1–2) might insinuate that we are dealing with the realm of false images.⁴² The *motif* of fathers and sons (explicit at the beginning of the *Life* with the citation of a proverb⁴³ and the moral for the children of the narratee, as well as in the last chapter, describing the end of the Antigonid line with Philip's sons) combines these threads together with the theme of education. Aratus was like a father, mentor, and instructor to Philip (46.3, 48.4). Was the latter a happy or an unfortunate "son" of Aratus? Was the Achaean statesman able to mold the character of his protégé or not? Plutarch ties these questions to Aratus' political career in two ways. First, he indicates that Aratus' flexible political conduct and his checkered career points at a slippery nature.⁴⁴ Second, Plutarch artistically joins the issue of consistency in a complex character (10) with the idea of a federation of disjointed parts, the ideal Aratus seems to have stood for (24.6).⁴⁵

It seems that the second *Life* of the pair, the biography of the Persian king Artaxerxes II Mnemon, is Plutarch's most neglected work. It rarely appears in discussions dealing with the biographer's aims, methods, and literary techniques.⁴⁶ The intriguing problem of *Quellenforschung* (source criticism) is occasionally tackled,⁴⁷ but very few scholars have focused on issues specific to it.⁴⁸ The reason for this neglect might be the peculiar place the *Artaxerxes* occupies within Plutarch's corpus as the only protagonist who is neither Greek nor Roman. As such, it is an exceptional work: it is one of the few works of classical literature centered on a character who is an outsider to the Greco-Roman world.⁴⁹ Equally remarkable is the fact that in modern Achaemenid scholarship Plutarch is still seen as a mere copyist who slavishly followed his sources or echoed royal propaganda reflected in the Greek sources.⁵⁰

The choice of Artaxerxes as a hero for a *Life* is intriguing and probably stemmed from several factors. One is related to the time of composition. It would seem that the idea to pick out a barbarian hero appealed to Plutarch at a relatively late stage of his writing. The departure from his own practice of choosing only Greek or Roman heroes would seem to be part of other pioneering notions, like innovations in structure (e.g. a biography of two historical figures like the Gracchi or Agis/Cleomenes) and content (e.g. the pairing of contemporary Roman and Greek, such as Flamininus and Philopoemen). Another reason is Plutarch's fascination with Persia. His attraction to the period when the clash with the eastern foe and the eventual victory over it was constitutive of the Hellenic sense of shared belonging is evident throughout his writings⁵¹ and corresponds to the nostalgia for the former glories of Greece seen in contemporary declamations and texts of the Second Sophistic.⁵² Moreover, the imperial attempt to draw parallels between the Greco-Persian wars and Roman operations in the East⁵³ was known to Plutarch and it may be that the interest in Persia had to do with the preparations for Trajan's Parthian campaign (114–117 CE).⁵⁴

Yet, as is usual with Plutarch, the type and amount of material in his possession ultimately dictated his decision. Indeed, Artaxerxes was known to educated readers in

Plutarch's time as the king against whom his brother, Cyrus the Younger, launched his failed campaign – the familiar subject-matter recounted in the first book of Xenophon's *Anabasis* – and as the Achaemenid ruler who succeeded in imposing his will on Greece. He was also a literary figure known to an audience acquainted with the fourth-century authors Ctesias the court physician of Artaxerxes,⁵⁵ and the obscure Deinon.⁵⁶ Answering his readers' expectations, Plutarch constructed the biography as composed from roughly four sections, into which the work can be divided:

1. The clash between the two brothers Cyrus and Artaxerxes, culminating with the battle of Cunaxa (401 BCE). This part (chs. 1–11), which shows the king as steadily assuming (or revealing) traits of ambition, is largely an adaptation of Xenophon's version, together with the accounts of Ctesias and Deinon, diverging in particular on the death of Cyrus (chs. 9–10).
2. The aftermath of the war and Artaxerxes' victory (chs. 12–19). This section includes brief episodes of murderous intrigues at the Persian royal court, in which the king's cruelty is seen and which come mostly from Ctesias (with some sections from Deinon).
3. A short section on the king's diplomatic successes in Greece and the zenith of Artaxerxes' political career (chs. 20–22). The image of the king in this part derives mostly from Greek orators (like Isocrates) and anecdotes on Greek and Persian relations in the fourth century whose original venue is unknown.
4. Political failures and moral failings of Artaxerxes (chs. 23–30). This section dwells on the king's vices in succumbing to his carnal pleasures, the incestuous relations (chs. 23, 27) he has with his daughter (or two daughters according to one account), his rage, and his brutal honor-seeking (ch. 25), portrayals which presumably come from Deinon. It also focuses on the military campaign against the Cadusians, which is depicted as a failure (chs. 24–25), and reaches its climax in the scene where the king kills his own son Darius (29.12, according to one version) in an attempt to suppress a revolt. In the final chapter Artaxerxes is seen to lose control over the court completely, a weakness that is exploited by his son Ochus.

Plutarch's portrayal of the Persian king is interestingly viewed in contradictory ways by several scholars: Orsi (Manfredini and Orsi (1987) xxvii–xxviii) stresses a positive characterization. Hood ((1967) 68–85), on the other hand, suggests a negative image. Schmidt ((1999) 318–324), in his research into the representation of barbarians in Plutarch's *Lives*, combines both approaches; he depicts Artaxerxes as better than other barbarians, including the minor characters in this biography, though the king's portrait also reveals negative traits. It is no wonder that there is no consensus on how to interpret the biography. In what is perhaps one of his most sophisticated works, Plutarch sets out to present a complex nature embodied in the Persian monarch. The work is constructed to depict a hero whose psyche is composed of two conflicting parts, one seemingly restrained and mild, the other licentious and brutal. This contrast is artistically presented by positing the Persian king between two persons who typify the extremes within his soul: on the one hand, the generous and kind nature of his grandfather Artaxerxes I at the beginning (*Art.* 1.1), and, on the other hand, the savage and callous character of his son Ochus (later Artaxerxes III) at the very end of the work (*Art.* 30.9). Indeed, at the

beginning of his rule, Artaxerxes II gives the impression that he is emulating his grandfather (*Art.* 4.4) and compared to his ruthless son he seems friendly to his subjects (*Art.* 30.9). Up to a certain point in the story, the king never tortures anyone or sentences any person to death, though this is what the reader expects from a Persian king. A turning point in the revelation (or transformation) of the king's character is a cruel punishment Artaxerxes administers to a soldier named Mithridates for daring to contradict the royal version of the death of Cyrus (*Art.* 16). Later on Artaxerxes is also pictured as executing many of his commanders out of fear for his reputation (*Art.* 25.3). The initial mild image of Artaxerxes is conveyed by the narrator, told rather than shown, and the reader may question whether it has a real basis. The true character of Artaxerxes is not entirely clear to the reader: Was his savage side hidden and only revealed during his lifetime? Or, conversely, was his mild nature only obscured by fabricated images by courtiers or the Greek sources?⁵⁷ Moreover, if these two traits are real, was there a change from a moderate to a brutal character?

The two biographies seem to share a common interest in the theme of a changed character during adult life, that is, after it is supposed to have been established and be fixed. The *Aratus* addresses this question directly with respect to the figure of Philip (49.1, 51.4), in passages that now form an essential part in the discussion on Plutarch's treatment of this issue.⁵⁸ The Macedonian king is twice said to appear as displaying some dramatic and inexplicable changes, such as cruelty or a transformation from a gentle prince to a tyrant.⁵⁹ In actuality, the narrator tells us, this is only a revelation of Philip's real character traits and "innate badness" (*kakia*), which were concealed for various reasons.⁶⁰ The point is not a side issue in the *Life*, since it concerns the very character of Aratus. As the instructor of Philip, Aratus seems to have failed and to have raised a tyrant. It is entirely typical of the Achaean statesman to renounce responsibility and blame the innate nature of Philip for his demeanor. Yet, what if Aratus' mentoring is a success story, in which Philip absorbs the true values of the Achaean statesman, changes his nature, and becomes the very person Aratus might have been if only he had sufficient security? Do we see a glimpse of Aratus' real features in his own cruelty? The biography is replete with instances of altered nature, which all reflect on the character of Aratus⁶¹; indeed, the narrator claims that from his treatment of Pellene onward Aratus was "no longer the same person" (31.3).

Aratus and Artaxerxes are both transitional figures; the latter died just a generation before Alexander and the Hellenistic period, the former on the eve of the Roman era in Greece. From beginning to end, the *Aratus* alludes to the political conduct of the Greeks that led to their downfall. In particular, it is the inner struggles that weakened the country. The petty academic squabbles at the beginning (on the true version of a proverb) reflect the futile conflicts of the Greeks, which eventually paved the way for the Macedonians⁶² and later Romans (conquerors of Macedonia in the last chapter).⁶³ The ending is admittedly elusive. Aratus' descendants are said to continue and live in Sicyon and Pellene. The fact that one family resides in two cities spells the persistence of inner Greek divisions; alternatively, it may also signify the success of political acclimatization, one of Aratus' distinguished traits.

It might also be said that a similar allusion to Rome is found in Plutarch's biography of the Persian monarch. To his Roman audience, the biographer may appear to indicate the possibility of overcoming the Eastern Empires, because Parthia, like Persia, ostensibly shares the same inherent corrupting weakness. Yet, from the Hellenic point of view, Greece's

submission to the conditions of Artaxerxes II in the King's Peace (387/6 BCE) was analogous to its position under Rome. The mention of Persia thus may allegorically symbolize the Imperial system.⁶⁴ To his Greek readers who understand this insinuation, Plutarch thus might be conveying a message of hope for a possible political change in the future.

NOTES

- 1 Nevertheless, these biographies might belong to the same stage in Plutarch's literary output. The *Artaxerxes* is seen by Leo ((1901) 157–158), Croiset ((1901) 5.526), Averincev ((1965) 57), and Binder ((2008) 57 and n. 226) to have preceded the *Parallel Lives* project. But the biography could just as well be the product of a later stage in the writer's career; its style and sophistication certainly seem to bear the mark of a mature mind (*contra* Leo). See *infra*. See Almagor (2014) on a hypothesis that the biography was written before or simultaneous with the *De Iside et Osiride* (363c), which is shown by Jones ((1966) 64 n.22, 73) to be composed c. 115 CE; Mossman ((2010) 145) sees no way of dating the *Artaxerxes*. The addressee of the *Aratus*, Polycrates, may be mentioned in *De Pyth. or.* 409, which is post-95 CE yet not Hadrianic (Jones (1966) 63–65, 72) and in *Quaest. conv.* 4.667c–671b. It would seem that the composition of the two *Lives* fell within the period in which Plutarch's parallel biographies seem to have been written, that is between the reigns of Nerva (96–98 CE) and Trajan (98–117 CE). See Jones (1966) and cf. the notes of Ziegler (1951) 708–719, 899–903.
- 2 The only exception might be the courtier Orontes, mentioned briefly in *Arat.* 3.5 and *Arat.* 27.7. We know from the account of Diod. 15.2, 8–11, that he had a larger role to play in the reign of Artaxerxes II and probably in Plutarch's source. The mention in the *Aratus*, however, is so vague that we can hardly be certain of his identity. Cf. Porter (1937) 51 and Manfredini and Orsi (1987) 197.
- 3 On Plutarch's Hellenistic *Lives* see Geiger ((1981) 89–94).
- 4 Cf. Mossman (2010) 145, 147, who claims there is no Greek context that could be used as parallel to the unique atmosphere of the Persian court.
- 5 I.e. those of Heracles, Hesiod, Pindar, or Crates. Respectively, Lamp. Cat. nos. 34–37.
- 6 Allegedly written by Plutarch's son; see *Suda* s.v. Lamprias (lambda, 96). For the Catalogue of Lamprias see Treu (1873); Ziegler (1908) 239–244, (1927) 20–21, and (1951) 696–702; Barrow (1967) 193–194; Sandbach (1969) 3–29; and Irigoin (1986).
- 7 Ziegler (1951) 258.
- 8 Plutarch's only two other biographies dedicated to poets, that is, Hesiod and Pindar, have Boeotian connections, which Aratus of Soli lacks. Plutarch was, however, interested in Aratus' *Phaenomena*: he cites the work in two places (*Aet. Phys.* 912d ~ *Phaen.* 946ff. and *De soll. an.* 967f ~ *Phaen.* 956) and the Lamprias Catalogue (no. 119) mentions one lost work on explanations to Aratus' other known poem, the *Weather Signs*.
- 9 This is the order that is maintained in the two arrangements of the *Lives* dated to the ninth and eleventh centuries: the two-volume edition, known as the *editio bipartita* (ordered according to the chronology of the Greek heroes), which was used by Photius (cod. 245, 398b–399a Bekker), and the three-volume *editio tripartita* (following the geographic origins of the Greek heroes). See Ziegler's introduction to the 1957 Teubner edition, I.1, v–xx; Manfredini and Orsi (1987) 311; Pade (2007) 1.57–58.
- 10 In an intermediate alignment that joined solitary biographies but did not yet pair them, it is possible to number the two other political figures to whom Plutarch is known to have devoted biographies, namely Daiphantus and Aristomenes (respectively, Lamp. Cat. nos. 38–39), as well as Heracles and Hesiod (nos. 34–35), the latter two maintaining the alphabetic ordering seen in the *Lives* under discussion.

- 11 Aratus' image as liberator or benefactor was equally prevalent among Greeks (Strabo 8.6.25) and Romans (Cic. *De Off.* 2.23.81–83).
- 12 See *infra*. A fragment recounts how Polybius asked Mummius to preserve the portrait of Achaëus, Aratus, and Philopoemen (Pol. 39.3.10).
- 13 Polyænus 4.6.1 and 6.5 may rely on *Arat.* 17–18. See Geiger ((1985) 62 and n. 110), who claims that Pausanias employed Plutarch. Cf. Paus. 2.8–9 (cf. 8.52.5).
- 14 See note 2 and Brenk (1977) 176–177.
- 15 In this respect Walbank ((1933) 16) seems to have been right; cf. Porter (1937) xiii–iv and Koster (1937) xviii.
- 16 See Geiger (1981) 89, exceptions at n. 13, who also points out (90–91) the fact that the period between the death of Alexander the Great and the battle of Pydna was dominated by the accounts of three authors: Hieronymus of Cardia, Phylarchus, and Polybius, who were in all likelihood read by Plutarch in a preliminary stage before deciding upon a protagonist. Hieronymus was presumably at the basis of Plutarch's work on *Eumenes*, *Demetrius*, and *Pyrrhus*, Phylarchus was consulted for the *Agis–Cleomenes*, and Polybius most probably inspired the choice of Aratus and Philopoemen.
- 17 See *Ag.-Cleom.* 13, 15 and 3–6, 12–25 [24–27, 33–46].
- 18 Cf. Momigliano (1971) 89, 93.
- 19 He could also be the same person as Tiberius Claudius Polycrates, referred to in *SIG*³ 846, but the identification is not certain as it may also signify his son (Jones (1966) 65 n. 34; (1971) 25 n. 41, 40; cf. *Arat.* 1.5).
- 20 See Geiger (1981) 87, 90, 91 n. 26; Mossman (2010) 145.
- 21 See Stadter (1988) 285, 295.
- 22 For instance, it is found in Isocrates' addresses to Nicocles, son of Evagoras (9.77), and especially to Philip (5.113), by pointing at their ancestors.
- 23 See Pelling (2002) 270; the second-person addressee disappears from sight and is not mentioned in the last chapter.
- 24 See Porter (1937) xiii and Koster (1937) xiv; *contra* Walbank (1933) 15 and Theunissen (1935) 303.
- 25 Respectively, Beloch (1925–1927) 626 and Porter (1937) lx–lxi.
- 26 Sources: Goltz (1883); Walbank (1933) 15–19; Theunissen (1935) 4–13; Koster (1937) xiv–xvii; Porter (1937) xiii–xx; Manfredini and Orsi (1987) ix–xv. Chronology: Walbank (1933) 116–211; Theunissen (1935) 135–147, 157–174, 203–216, 252–266, 287–299; Koster (1937) liii–lxxxviii; Porter (1937) xxi–xxxi, xxxiv–xxxviii, xlv–xlviii, lvii–lix, lxxviii–lxxxi, lxxxvi–lxxxvii, xcvi–xcviii.
- 27 Holleaux (1906), Gruen (1972), Mendels (1980), Orsi (1982), (1990).
- 28 Kracauer (1874).
- 29 Neumeyer (1885/6), Freeman (1863), and to a certain extent Ferrabino (1921).
- 30 Droysen (1877), Beloch (1925–1927), Walbank (1933) 1, 159, 162, and even Theunissen (1935) 314, 319–320.
- 31 Walbank (1933) 19; Theunissen (1935) 303; Porter (1937) xix.
- 32 Plutarch mentions the work explicitly at *Art.* 3.3, 32.5, 38.11; cf. *Ag.-Cleom.* 16.6 [37.6]. Apology: see Walbank (1933) 7–8; Theunissen (1935) 5; Porter (1937) xvii; Koster (1937) xv; Manfredini and Orsi (1987) xi.
- 33 Walbank (1933) 6; Porter (1937) xvi; cf. Polyb. 1.3.2, 4.1.9–4.2.1.
- 34 Jacoby (1930) 654–656.
- 35 Porter (1937) xvi–xvii. It might even be that Polybius did not possess firsthand knowledge of the memories. See the suggestion of Gudeman (1938).
- 36 Plutarch mentions Phylarchus in *Arat.* 38.12, where he agrees with the last accusation of Polybius. Cf. *Them.* 32.4. Cf. *Ag.-Cleom.*

- 37 Mentioned explicitly at *Arat.* 38.11, 12. Cf. *Ag.-Cleom.* 25.3, 27.5 [46.3, 48.5].
- 38 Walbank (1933) 11; Theunissen (1935) 305–306; Manfredini and Orsi (1987) xi.
- 39 Cf. *Arat.* 17.7.
- 40 Cf. Duff (1999) 52–57, and 68–69 on the *Aratus*.
- 41 Cf. the mention of fate or chance (9.3, 12.5), the occasions when Aratus prefers not to join battle (27.4, 31.2, 35.7, 36.3, 37.1–2), his tendency to blame others (e.g. Erginus: 33.3) for his own deeds, his avoidance of office (38.1–4), and most noteworthy, his excuse for bringing in the Macedonians to the Peloponnese by necessary contingencies (38.11, 43.2) and his subsequent loss of freedom of action (45.4).
- 42 Cf. the external false similarities in 20.4, and cf. 3.5.
- 43 “Who will praise a father, except happy sons?” and, according to another version, “except unhappy/unfortunate sons.”
- 44 See, for instance, the image of Aratus’ ship carried to wherever the wind takes it (12.2); cf. the explicit mention of the “ship of state” in 38.5.
- 45 Cf. the inner Greek struggle in Messene mentioned in 49.2 as an allegory for these aforementioned character traits.
- 46 The exceptions are Leo (1901) 157–158; Hirzel (1912) 27, 62; Weizsaecker (1931) 77, 81; Ziegler (1951) 898 n. 1, 912; Wardman (1971) 258–259; Pelling (1990) 226, 232; Duff (1999) 29–30, 304 n. 53. One might say that, ironically, in contradistinction to his nickname Mnemon (“the mindful”), his biography was largely forgotten.
- 47 Heeren (1826) 94–97; Haug (1854) 87–98; Schottin (1865); Smith (1881); Mantey (1888); Krumbholz (1889); König (1972) 106–109; Marasco (1994) 658–669; Stevenson (1997) 24–29.
- 48 Until recently, only three brief commentaries have been written on the *Life*, one in French by Flacelière and Chambry (1979), and two in Italian by Manfredini and Orsi (1987) 267–308 and Marasco (1994) 657–670. A recent commentary in German by Binder (2008) is essentially historical and restricted in its treatment of Achaemenid reality: see the reviews of Kuhrt (2009) and Lenfant (2011). Mossman (2010) should be commended for a literary analysis of the work.
- 49 The immediate predecessor of Plutarch in this respect was probably the Latin biographer Cornelius Nepos (c. 110–24 BCE), who composed the *Lives* of Hamilcar, Hannibal, and Datames.
- 50 Cf. Briant (2002) 227–228, 238, 255, 269, 612–613.
- 51 Hood (1967); Pelling (2007).
- 52 See Bowie (1970) 7, 14, 27; Swain (1996) 95–96; Whitmarsh (2005) 68 n. 43; cf. Philostr. *VS* 519–520, 541, 595.
- 53 On this identification see Cic. *Dom.* 60; Verg. *G.* 4.290; Prop. 2.13.1–2, 3.3.11.21; Hor. *Carm.* 1.2.22, 51, 1.21.14, 2.2.17, 3.3.44, 3.5.4, 4.14.42; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.225; Sen. *Apocol.* 12. See Rosivach (1984) 2–3; Spawforth (1994) esp. 237–243; and Hardie (1997) on Augustan appropriation of fifth-century images of the Persian Wars. Cf. Isaac (2004) 375–380. Even the Parthians considered themselves successors of the Persians: Tac. *Ann.* 6.31.
- 54 Cf. Arrian’s *Parthica* (*FGrH* 156 F 30–53). The inspiration ignited by Trajan’s expedition may be analogous to the influence exerted by the campaigns of Verus (162–166 CE). Cf. Polyaeus, *Strat.* 8. *praef.*
- 55 The fragments of Ctesias’ *Persica* are found in Jacoby, *FGrHF* 688 and Lenfant (2004). See the recent translations of Llewellyn-Jones and Robson (2010) and Stronk (2010).
- 56 Fragments of his work are collected by Jacoby, *FGrHF* 690. This author was known and used in the Roman period. See Nepos, *Conon* 5.4, who praises his trustworthiness, and cf. Pliny, *HN* 1.10, 10.136; Cic. *Div.* 1.46; and most likely Pompeius Trogus (*Prol.* 10; Justin 10.1–2). See Drews (1973) 116–119; Stevenson (1987), (1997); Lenfant (2009) 51–253.

- 57 The important word that recurs in these passages is “seems” (*edoxe*: 4.4; *doxas*: 30.9). See Almagor (2009).
- 58 See Russell (1966) 144–147; Brenk (1977) 176–181; Swain (1989); Gill (1983) and (2006) 416.
- 59 Cf. Polybius’ verdict in 10.26.8 and 7.13.7.
- 60 See Swain (1989) 66 on Plutarch’s *De sera* 562c, where it is claimed that the tyrant and the thief only disclose their thievery and lawlessness when they find the opportunity and ability.
- 61 See the case of Lydiadas, the tyrant of Megalopolis who seems to change and to resign his tyranny (30.3–8); cf. Swain (1989) 66; Plutarch’s treatment is more complex than Polybius 2.44.5.
- 62 Shown explicitly at *Arat.* 49.2.
- 63 The narrator’s claim that the capture of the Acrocorinth was the final Greek achievement (24.2) also intimates that the last powers in Greece have subsequently worn themselves out.
- 64 Plutarch might even be presenting the Roman emperor as a Persian king. Cf. the employment of terms used by Greek authors to portray Roman Imperial institutions like “satraps” or “Great King.” See Mason (1970) 157; Bowie (1970) 33 n. 95; Swain (1996) 176, 321 n. 80. Cf. Dio Chrysostom 7.66, 7.93, 33.14, 47.9, 50.6; Philostr. *VS* 524. Note that the dedication of the collection of sayings *Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata* attributed to Plutarch has the emperor Trajan explicitly compared to Artaxerxes II. According to Beck (2002) this dedication is authentic.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For the period of Aratus, the monograph of F.W. Walbank, *Philip V of Macedon* (Cambridge, 1940) is still important in presenting the complex personality of the Macedonian king and his political skill; Walbank's *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* (Oxford, 1957–1979), especially the first volume, is essential. On the internal structure of the Achaean League, see J.A.O. Larsen, *Greek Federal States* (Oxford, 1968), especially pp. 215–240. On Cleomenes III's Sparta and his historical significance see P. Cartledge and A. Spawforth, *Hellenistic and Roman Sparta: A Tale of Two Cities* (London and New York, 1989). A wonderful introduction to the sources of our knowledge of the Achaemenid Persian Empire is A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources of the Achaemenid Period* (London and New York, 2007) in two volumes. A useful textbook is J. Wiesehofer's *Ancient*

Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD (London and New York, 1996, a translation of *Das antike Persien von 550 v. Chr. bis 650 n. Chr.* (Munich and Zurich, 1994)). On royal women in the Persian court and their importance see A. Brosius, *Women in Ancient Persia, 559–331 BC* (Oxford, 1996) and concerning internal affairs at the time of Artaxerxes II see in particular M. Weiskopf, *The So-Called "Great Satraps' Revolt," 366–360 B.C.* (Stuttgart, 1989). D.M. Lewis' *Sparta and Persia* (Leiden, 1977) is indispensable for the understanding of Achaemenid diplomatic relations with Greece. For the situation in Sparta and Thebes see P. Cartledge, *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (London, 1987), J. Buckler, *The Theban Hegemony* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), and M. Jehne, *Koine Eirene* (Stuttgart, 1994). For Xenophon and his *Anabasis*, see S.W. Hirsch, *The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire* (Hanover, NH, 1985) and the unsurpassable commentary of O. Lendle, *Kommentar zu Xenophons Anabasis* (Darmstadt, 1995). Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* should also be compared with the *Lives* of two Greek contemporaries, on which see the important studies published in the same year: A. Georgiadou, *Plutarch's Pelopidas* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1997) and D.R. Shipley, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Life of Agesilaos* (Oxford, 1997).

CHAPTER 20

The Project of the *Parallel Lives*

Plutarch's Conception of Biography

Joseph Geiger

The *Parallel Lives* are Plutarch's best known and most successful work, the project of his mature years and the fruit of his most consummate ideas and reflexions. His earlier experiments with biographical writing, though at the time certainly not meant to be steps leading up to a major project, displayed neither the accomplishment nor the originality of Plutarch's acme. The *Lives of the Caesars*, discussed above (see Georgiadou), whether tentatively to be dated to between 79 and 96, as Jones ((1966) = (1995)) would have it, or under Nerva (Geiger (1975); Syme (1980)), were completed before the *Parallel Lives*, and neither the concept of a biographical series of rulers divined the originality nor their literary execution the full-blown artistry of the later work. Other, lost, biographies by our author are possible to date only by reasoning rather than by solid evidence. The *Life of Hesiod*, *Life of Pindar*, *Life of Crates*, the Theban follower of Diogenes the Cynic, and the *Life of the Boeotian general Daiphantus* (all attested in the Lamprias Catalogue, nos. 35–38) were no doubt all works with a local-patriotic stamp, perhaps composed for certain festive occasions and, we may assume with some confidence, in the tradition of Greek encomiastic writing. Also the *Life of Heracles* (Lamprias Catalogue 34 and fragments) should be placed with his Boeotian biographies, supporting the Theban version of the hero's descent. There is no knowing what induced him to write an *Aristomenes* (Lamprias Catalogue 39, certainly a *Life*, listed among the biographies), though it has been suggested (Wilamowitz (1995) 65 n. 28, not taken up by Ogden (2004) 193–195) that it may have been a pendant to the *Life of Daiphantus* – the hero has aided the Thebans at the battle of Leuctra. Finally, *Scipio Africanus* (no doubt the Elder, Lamprias Catalogue 28 and some references) must have been written before the idea of the *Parallel Lives* occurred to him, otherwise it is inconceivable that this biography was not included in the series. For the extant *Artaxerxes*, perhaps contemporary with the *Parallel Lives* (but there is of course no knowing whether this was not

the execution of a much earlier conceived plan), there was no place in the series, while the *Aratus* is dedicated to Plutarch's friend Polycrates, Aratus' countryman and ancestor.

All in all the series as we have it now comprises twenty-two books; since one book, *Agis, Cleomenes–Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus*, has double pairs we have now twenty-three biographies of Greeks and twenty-three of Romans. It has been assumed that the lost pair *Epaminondas–Scipio Africanus* (the Younger) was the first, introductory pair, a homage to the biographer's compatriot and to the noble patron of an earlier Greek, Polybius. A number of other biographies known from references were either only planned but never written, or lost even before the completion of the Lamprias Catalogue.

While the single biographies and the series on the emperors did not lack precedent and needed no special rationale, for the innovative project of the *Parallel Lives* we must ask whether we can detect a special reasoning and perhaps a particular occasion that provided the first motivation for such a major venture. There were of course Nepos' biographies, containing series of Roman and Greek (in a second edition foreign) generals, comparing the groups implicitly, or perhaps even explicitly. But even if Plutarch was acquainted with this work before planning the *Parallel Lives*, there is great originality in an entire series of books, each of which consists of the *Life* of a Greek and a Roman statesman or general compared with each other. Though the final composition of the series grew and developed as Plutarch went along (see below), the very conception of an entire series must have lain at the very foundations of the project. Here there was no doubt about the import of the innovation: even those, like Moles (1989), who deny the invention, as it were, of political biography by Nepos (Geiger (1985)) and insist on the existence of such *Lives* in the Hellenistic period do not believe that entire series of such *Lives* were then composed. Thus the only known precedent for Plutarch for the composition of a series was Nepos, and it is against him that we must appraise his originality. But first, it may be best to start with Plutarch's own statements regarding his biographical aims and methods, and it may be as well to start with the first and best known of these.

It is the life of Alexander the king, and of Caesar, who overtook Pompey, that I am writing in this book, and the multitude of the deeds to be treated is so great that I shall make no other preface than to entreat my readers, in case I do not tell of all the famous actions of these men, nor even speak exhaustively at all in each particular case, but in epitome for the most part, not to complain. For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives; and in the most illustrious deeds there is not always a manifestation of virtue or vice, nay, a slight thing like a phrase or a jest often makes a greater revelation of character than battles where thousands fall, or the greatest armaments, or sieges of cities. Accordingly, just as painters get the likenesses in their portraits from the face and the expression of the eyes, wherein the character shows itself, but make very little account of the other parts of the body, so I must be permitted to devote myself rather to the signs of the soul in men, and by means of these to portray the life of each, leaving to others the description of their great contests. (*Alex.* 1)¹

We shall return to what we may learn from this passage about the biographer's aims and methods, but first I would like to linger on a less exploited aspect of our passage. The comparison with the portraitist's art is not a mere literary device enlivening the argument, but of the very essence of Plutarch's thought. For the modern reader it is difficult to imagine from the scanty remains of ancient statuary and even more meager vestiges of painted portraits – only rarely to be seen in their original context – the wealth of human

images by which ancient Greeks and Romans were surrounded: suffice it to mention that a late antique text (*Curiosum/Notitia Urbis Romae*), dwelling only on the extraordinary, lists twenty-two or twenty-three large equestrian statues, eighty gilded and seventy-four or eighty-four ivory statues of gods – bronze and marble could hardly have been counted; and this of course does not take account of the wealth of portraiture inside houses and in private gardens. (For the wealth of statuary see Stewart (2003) esp. 118–136.) We know that Plutarch displayed great interest in the physical appearance of his heroes and that he resorted, whenever possible, to their statues in order to learn about it (Wardman (1967)). He could hardly have been unaware of the superiority of the plastic arts, in this heyday of realistic portraiture, as against the rather mediocre products of the biographers of statesmen and generals – certainly so if they were of the stature of Nepos. Thus it may not be too bold an assumption that Plutarch was to rise to the challenge in producing literary images, warts and all, that would not fall short in their artistry of the best of portraits.

To this general consideration there may be added a specific suggestion. Curiously, little attention has been paid to the fact that all the Romans in the *Parallel Lives* belong in the Republic, as if there were any hindrance to describe great men under the Empire even after a series of biographies of the emperors had been completed, not to mention the fact that for these more recent figures as a rule source material may have been more readily available. Though Wilamowitz ((1995) 57) remarks that “none of the emperors appears, nor any of the kings after Alexander (for Demetrius did not rule an empire),” he must have sensed that the latter half of his argument is weak, since eventually there were included a number of Hellenistic figures (and even the kings Agis and Cleomenes, though of course they were not successors of Alexander; Eumenes, though no king, had for some time almost royal powers); but more importantly, why did he not inquire about heroes from Imperial times who were not members of the ruling house? Now it has been suggested (Geiger (2005), (2008) *passim*) that there was one place where the borderline between the great men of the Republic and of the Empire was visually conspicuous and where inspiration for the description of great Romans and their deeds was almost forced on you. In the Forum of Augustus in Rome, a city with which Plutarch was well acquainted, there stood in long rows the marble statues of the heroes of the Republic as chosen by the princeps. These were followed, by his explicit instruction, by the bronze statues of their peers of the Imperial Age. Thus one would not only be visually presented with the Grandeur that was Rome in the shape of the men (and some women) who turned her into the mistress of the world, but there was an obvious cut-off point that could easily be put opposite the Glory that was Greece.

For, indeed, the Greek heroes to be put opposite the Romans are for the most part the representatives of the best age of Athens and Sparta down to the time of Alexander, and it has been suggested (Geiger (1981)=(1995)) that the much fewer Hellenistic subjects of the biographies were a late addition as the series expanded. To be sure, we are told by the biographer himself (*Aem. Paul.* 1) that the series grew as he went along, so that it is easy to imagine that additional *Lives* were added to a primary list that must have been in his mind when he first put reed to papyrus.

The effect of the composition that emerges from this passage, taken together with the introductory passage of the *Alexander–Caesar*, are our best guides to the aims and methods of the *Parallel Lives*:

I began the writing of my *Lives* for the sake of others, but I find that I am continuing the work and delighting in it for my own sake also, using history as a mirror and endeavoring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted. For the result is like nothing else than daily living and associating together, when I receive and welcome each subject of my history in turn as my guest, so to speak, and observe carefully “how large he was and of what mien” (*Il.* 24.630), and select from his career what is most important and most beautiful to know, “And oh! What greater joy than this canst thou obtain” (*Soph. Tympanistae*, Nauck² p. 270) and more efficacious for moral improvement? ... But in my own case, the study of history and the familiarity with it which my writing produces, enables me, since I always cherish in my soul the records of the noblest and most estimable characters, to repel and put far from me whatever base, malicious or ignoble suggestion my enforced associations may intrude upon me, calmly and dispassionately turning my thoughts away from them to the fairest of my examples. (*Aem. Paul.* 1)

In another introduction (*Per.* 1–2) Plutarch, in a more philosophical mood, insists on the superiority of virtuous deeds as examples:

Our outward sense, since it apprehends the objects which encounter it by virtue of their mere impact upon it, must needs, perhaps, regard everything that presents itself, be it useful or useless; but in the exercise of his mind every man, if he pleases, has the natural power to turn himself away in every case, and to change, without the least difficulty, to the object upon which he himself determines ... our intellectual vision must be applied to such objects as, by their very charm, invite it onward to its own proper good. Such objects are to be found in virtuous deeds; these implant in those who search them out a great and zealous eagerness which leads to imitation ... virtuous action straightway so disposes a man that he no sooner admires the works of virtue than he strives to emulate those who wrought them.

Add to these two passages his statement in the introduction to the pair *Demetrius–Antony* according to which this pair, and perhaps one or two others, are introduced as deterrent examples and one gets a fairly good picture of Plutarch’s methods and aims (*Demetr.* 1).

... the ancient Spartans would put compulsion upon their helots at the festivals to drink much unmixed wine, and would bring them into the public messes, in order to show their young men what it was to be drunk. And though I do not think that the perverting of some to secure the setting right of others is very humane, or a good civil policy, still, when men have led reckless lives, and have become conspicuous, in the exercise of power or in great undertakings, for badness, perhaps it will not be much amiss for me to introduce a pair or two of them into my biographies, though not that I may merely divert and amuse my readers by giving variety to my writing. Ismenias the Theban used to exhibit both good and bad players to his pupils on the flute and say, “you must play like this one,” or again, “you must not play like this one”; and Antigenidas used to think that young players would listen with more pleasure to good flute-players if they were given an experience of bad ones also. So, I think, we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad. This book will therefore contain the Lives of Demetrius the City-besieger and Antony the Emperor, men who bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato’s saying that great natures exhibit great vices as well as great virtues.

Yet even his few negative examples are, despite the author's protestations, far from being unattractive. Consider the comparison in the following sentence: "Both alike were amorous, bibulous, warlike, munificent, extravagant, and domineering, and they had corresponding resemblances in their fortunes." Whose appetite would not be whetted to read about such men?

Of course Plutarch, even if the very best representative of a relatively young literary genre, did not have to invent his approach from scratch: "The narrative technique in the *Lives of the Caesars* was also similar to that followed by historians; but in the *Parallel Lives* the literary elaboration is more conspicuous, the psychological exploration is richer and more colourful, and the interpretations and personal opinions of the author himself are more frequent and more profound" (Scardigli (1995) Introduction, 26). This, of course, should not blind us to the biographer's great achievement: "for all we know, the scale and scope of the Plutarchian *bioi* could be his own invention" (Russell (1966)=(1995) 86). It is, as so often, the fusion between traditional components and the author's own original contribution that makes for the exciting blend of a great literary work of art.

Another programmatic pronouncement of Plutarch, contrasting his biographies with history, appears in his essay *On the Malice of Herodotus* (866A–F), a rare attack on the Father of History, whose great sin in the eyes of the biographer was his anti-Boeotian bias. He also assails the historian for not giving due credit to the heroism of Leonidas and the Spartans at Thermopylae, a fault he promises to put right in his *Life of Leonidas* (which he failed to compose, or at any rate it did not come down to us): it is the task of the author to depict noble actions and noble sayings. By the way, this passage offers also an insight into Plutarch's method of work, as he quotes here a great number of sayings many of which recur in the *Sayings of Spartans* (225A–D), whether or not this work is authentic: clearly long before writing a biography he assembled some material, famous deeds and sayings, that were eventually to be integrated into the *Life*.

Needless to say there is, as always, a considerable gap between the author's initial and most sincere intentions and the eventual outcome, influenced as it is by the contingencies of the available material and by the twists and turns in the process of writing, nor should one overstate the conformity of a long series each of whose members is a work of art in itself – in fact, in the case of the *Parallel Lives*, a piece of art involving pendants.

But it is Plutarch's conception of biography that is at the center of the present discussion. Here an important consideration, even if seemingly obvious, should be accorded due attention. With the fundamental decision to dedicate the series to the lives of men from the political and military sphere also a concomitant decision as to the nature of the work has been made. The biographies of men from intellectual walks of life, poets, writers, philosophers etc., have been studied – or invented – so as better to understand their works and achievement. Only by studying the life of Euripides could one understand his female characters, comprehend his supposed misogyny. Of course such an approach involved the danger of a vicious circle: given that a certain reading was applied to the plays and the female characters in it, the anecdotes of his life that would provide an adequate interpretation to the construction of these characters had to be supplied, and were it from what seemed the probable rather than the proven. At the other end of the scale of the relatives of political biography stands history, written for pragmatic ends, such as envisaged by Polybius: if you studied the historical events suitably you could learn the lesson for subsequent situations of a related kind.

Thus both these literary genres, intellectual biography and the sub-genre of history that centered around the achievements of one person, served a useful purpose. What was the use of political biography? Here we must go back to Plutarch's statement at the outset of the *Alexander–Caesar*. Forgoing the study of the details of great sieges and battles meant that Plutarch's biography was not to compete with history in enabling the budding general to learn his lesson from the greatest general of them all and imitate his lines of battle, tactics, and ruses: it was his character and moral build-up that were to be analyzed and from which a lesson was to be learned. To what purpose? Here the answer is less simple than it would occur at first sight. Indeed, we have seen that Plutarch expressly holds up the study of the character of his heroes for his own and the reader's moral improvement. However, this moral improvement is surely not meant to enable one to compete with the political or military achievements of the heroes of the *Lives* – for that end indeed the study of history would be more unequivocal. It must be, then, that it is only the great men of history who can teach us to understand, and eventually to improve, ourselves. Indeed Aristotle spoke for all the Greeks when he combined serious action with persons of elevated status – the day when serious moral lessons could be learned from the characters and actions of Scandinavian burghers, Russian students, or the daughters of minor English gentry has not yet come. Nor, one suspects, were the Greeks ready yet to take the fictitious characters of what we term their novels seriously rather than as entertainment literature, even if intended also for an educated readership (Bowie (1994)).

It has been suggested (Russell (1966)=(1995) 78) that “[o]ne purpose of the *Lives* ... was... to provide a repertoire of *exempla* for public men.” This, of course, may well have been so and indeed the various *apophthegmata* collections could be taken to support such a view. Yet exploiting the stories of the lives of great men for public life and political purposes without assuming at least some moral improvement from studying them would seem to me an unduly cynical view surely not intended by that scholar. At any rate, that “one purpose” would involve only a small minority of the biographer's intended readership – or are we to assume that in those days before ratings and best-seller lists authors were totally indifferent to the size of their public?

A corollary of the biographer's purpose, restricted to the Roman *Lives*, is the importance he accords to the heroes' Hellenic *paideia* (for this and what follows cf. Swain (1990)=(1995)). The importance of culture for the shaping of character tells of course more about the biographer than about his subjects. The degree of absorption of Greek culture is for him an important yardstick in evaluating Roman character, as can be demonstrated by various examples. In the early Rome of Coriolanus there was yet no opportunity to acquire Hellenic culture, and his failings are connected with this lack of *paideia*. Marius' miserable old age and tragic end are deeply connected with his deliberate rejection of Greek learning – without that support he is prey to his ambition and without the means to stand up to the changes of fortune. Marcellus, though best known as a great military hero, Rome's Sword to Fabius Maximus' Rome's Shield, “benefits himself and others with Greek culture” (254), and this at any early stage of the hellenization of Rome. Nevertheless, it is quite surprising to find Plutarch approving of Marcellus' transportation of works of art as spoils from Sicily to Rome (cf. Duff (1999) 305). Lastly, Lucullus, a man toward whom Chaeronea, and the author hailing from that city, had good reason to be grateful (see *Cim.* 2.2). Thus Plutarch underplays the characteristic

Lucullus is best known for, his luxurious living, and instead emphasizes his Hellenic education and culture. This entire feature of Plutarch's Roman *Lives* should be seen as an important aspect of the development of character.

It seems to me that insisting on Plutarch's moralistic purpose is of the highest importance. We must carefully distinguish between the author's initial objective and plan, and the eventual effect on his intended readership and indeed his own reaction when confronted with his final product. There is no need to view the decision to contrast Greeks and Romans as a political decision. Once the idea of biographies of great men in the political and military spheres was conceived, the pairing of Greeks and Romans, however innovative, may well have been a by-product conditioned by his times and surroundings without a necessarily well-thought-out purpose. Certainly the great literary success of pairing and contrasting *Lives* does not militate against the assumption that their initial concept was due, at least to a large extent, to literary considerations. We must not impose our concerns on the ancients. When Plutarch wished to contrast Greek public men of his time with the Roman rulers, he was well able to do so (see e.g. the *Political Precepts*). It may well be best to refrain from a maximalist reading of Plutarch's text and beware of overshooting the mark in generalizing a confrontation of Greeks and Romans where he restricted himself to individual comparisons. Whatever political lessons his contemporaries, or his contemporaries as imagined by modern scholars, may have drawn from Plutarch's parallels, they may well be considered side-benefits rather than the author's main goals.

Yet be the biographer's purpose what it be, the wider controversy concerning the Greeks' attitude to their past, including of course that of our author, cannot disregard his moralistic purpose. Whatever the political frustrations of the present, and they certainly can also be detected in some of Plutarch's works, it is true that the education and upbringing of the age was framed by the reference to the classical past: thus perhaps both the importance of the frame of reference (Millar (1969)=(2004)) and the choice of that particular frame of reference (Bowie (1970)=(1974)) have to be taken into account when considering Plutarch's stance. Yet above all it was a lesson he had to teach: and that lesson could have been derived only from that common ground to all educated Greeks, their past as hallowed in their literary tradition. But it is of some interest that he managed to accord the Romans an equal share in the moral lesson he delivered.

Nevertheless it has been suggested (Duff (1999), esp. 287–309) that the parallelism far transcends that observed in the individual pairs, and that in fact the entire series is a juxtaposition of Greek and Roman history, the construct of Hellenism versus that of Romanness. Yet the mirror images of the two cultures do not obliterate the fact that the entire work is written from a Greek point of view, that it is the Roman, and Rome, that is measured by the yardstick of the Greek, and of Greece. Though as we saw Plutarch had some precedent in Nepos, there never has been (and seems never to have been repeated) an attempt on a comparable scale to juxtapose the two dominant civilizations of antiquity.

Next we shall consider another aspect of the *Parallel Lives* that only rarely gets its due, their relation to their author. Accepting the innovative character of political biography, certainly on that scale, an observation regarding author and work is almost inevitable. Comparing the work to historiography one is aware of the well-known fact – no doubt noticed by Plutarch himself – that so many of its best and most famous practitioners were men of affairs, often deeply involved in the events described by them. Plutarch is obviously closer to the breed of arm-chair historians of the kind of Livy, whose writing

is motivated to a considerable extent by nostalgia for the Good Old Times (cf. e.g. his *Preface*). This, then, will be an additional factor in choosing his heroes, or rather in choosing the database, so to speak, from which his heroes will be extracted. His contemporary, Tacitus, was still an historian and a person of some importance in the political life; such Greeks as the somewhat later Arrian and Appian managed to combine Imperial service with historical writing. Plutarch, modestly satisfied with his minor municipal functions, turned to a far away past, once he felt attracted to exploring the mindsets behind the actions of great men. If in all but ignoring Greek history after Alexander he was in accord with the prevailing mood of the Second Sophistic, this also certainly did not go against his own attitude.

It must be the source-critical bias of classical scholars that caused the neglect of comparing Plutarch and Livy: it is exactly the latter's fascination with *quae vita, qui mores* (*praef.* 9) that we find again in Plutarch, though of course with somewhat different emphases. It is remarkable how much Plutarch was enthralled by the distant past, both Greek and Roman, and to what extent this attraction determined the colors he applied to his canvas. Surely his exemplary figures were captivating, as he carefully notes in the prefatory passage of the *Aemilius Paulus–Timoleon* (quoted above).

Plutarch's fascination with the past never made him lose contact with the present or lessen his curiosity for the world he inhabited. A good example may be seen in the *Life of Publicola*: after telling the story of Tarquin's founding and of Horatius' consecrating the Temple of Capitoline Jupiter (ch. 14) he goes on to tell in the next chapter the later fortunes of the Temple. The original Temple was destroyed in the civil war of Sulla, and a second was built by him, but consecrated after his death by Catulus. This building, in its turn, was destroyed in the Year of Four Emperors and a third was built by Vespasian, only to be burnt with the entire Capitol on the death of that emperor. The fourth Temple, which stood still at the time of writing, was built and consecrated by Vespasian.

Of course excursions have been always part and parcel of the writing of history, but it is as well to ask about their function in the writing of political biography. The present example, one of many, is particularly apt: obviously there was a dearth of material about Publicola, one of the earliest Plutarchan heroes, and perhaps mainly for that reason did we get the lengthy description of the foundation of the first Capitoline Temple, which was of little relevance for the *Life*. The further story of the fortunes of the successive buildings must have been of great interest to the author – one imagines his oral source as a tourist guide or perhaps learned acquaintance in Rome – and was clearly also meant to educate the reader in conveying to him the long and complicated historical background of present-day realities. If in his excursions the biographer is so close to the practice of historians, it reflects perhaps less on the proximity of the genres than on the common background and education of the practitioners of the various genres.

When considering Plutarch inspecting old battlefields, contemplating famous buildings and statues of past heroes, or weighing the pros and cons of their actions, we must never lose sight of his sentimental approach. For sure, he never lost his head, but he also never was heartless and cold when confronted with his heroes. Moreover, we must also not go along with the approach to “sources” as developed in “source criticism” – a highly useful branch of scholarship, but one that would unduly restrain us in our present quest. In a certain sense the entire intellectual load an author carries, whether books read or other information, constitutes his treasure-house of sources. Now for Plutarch we happen to

have a comprehensive list of his quotations (Helmbold and O'Neil (1959)), reflecting his mastery of all genres of the entire Greek (and a very little Latin) literature. In regard to both the volume of his surviving work and the diversity of their literary genres he may well be our best-preserved Greek author, but at any rate he was one of the best-read ones.

Yet his task was more difficult than appears at first sight. Once we realize that he had in most cases no biographical sources to follow, and those that were available to him may more often than not be of rather limited literary value, we have to envisage the way he forged his particular brand of literary piece of art. In one, perhaps unique, fortunate instance, in which he draws for the main story of a *Life* exclusively from one extant source, it is possible to see his transformation of his material into the full-blown literary portrait of his biography. We shall try to enter the work process of our author in following the analysis of one of the great Plutarch scholars of our time – in fact one of the great scholars of our time *tout court* (Russell (1963) = (1995)).

Plutarch's *Life of Coriolanus* is, in essence, "a transposition into biographical form of the historical narrative in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, Books v to viii" (357). This said, it is also almost immediately added (358) that there is some added material, "antiquarian and philosophical digressions and moral reflections" (and, add to these, some "speculative expansion," "fictional expansion," "speculative embellishment" [362]) – in fact, a demonstration of what constitutes, as argued above, Plutarch's "sources" in the not restrictive, not source-critical sense. Plutarch is sometimes critical of his source, is guilty of some errors, no doubt because he is relying on his memory, and he of course does not stick to Dionysius' far from memorable prose. But the most important issue is that of the literary genre:

The most important cause of Plutarch's deviations from Dionysius is of course the difference between the demands of *bioi* and those of *historia*. Thus the scanty hints about Marcius' youth and upbringing had to be expanded; education is an indispensable topic. The enormous speeches in which Dionysius took such pride had no place in a work on Plutarch's scale, though they formed a reservoir of argument and comment on which the biographer could draw. There was also a serious problem of proportion: of the two great crises, the campaign of Corioli and the exile of Coriolanus and its sequel, Dionysius' account of the former needed considerable expansion (chapters 8 to 11 in Plutarch); in the latter, by contrast, he had to be abridged and chastened. Finally, and most important of all, Plutarch had formed his own interpretation of his hero's character and imposes it on the story; it is primarily through him that it became what it was for Shakespeare, a tragedy of ambition and anger. (360)

I shall forgo following in the footsteps of Russell's detailed analysis of this *Life*, though I will dwell on some instructive points. It is readily understood that in a biographical treatment due weight has to be given to the hero's childhood and youth. In the present case the pairing with Alcibiades, for whom such information was abundantly available, made the task doubly imperative. Often the biographer has recourse to details that would best suit an author of historical novels. At other instances details and events are shifted so as better to display the human interest in the story. Shifts in emphasis are particularly conspicuous in Plutarch's abrupt abridgment of the story of Coriolanus' trial and the prominence accorded to the speech of his mother. But of course it is the somewhat different emphasis on the character traits of his hero that makes the biographer's picture so different from the historian's. Plutarch's Coriolanus lacks in Hellenic *paideia*, is in fact a noble barbarian – this is why despite his good natural endowment so much with him

went wrong. What with his inclination to anger, his pride, and the jealousy of some actors in the drama and the picture of the tragic hero is complete.

The great prominence given to the hero's childhood, upbringing, and youth as an essential ingredient of Plutarch's biographical scheme may be best observed in comparing his *Alexander* with an historical work like Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander*, composed perhaps half a century later. Of course Alexander was the best known and most exciting historical figure of all antiquity and a variety of sources of varying value were available about him – for Arrian no doubt also Plutarch's *Life*. Yet Arrian starts his extensive narrative (close to four times as long as Plutarch's) with the death of Philip and the accession of Alexander, totally disregarding anything that happened to him before he became king. Now observe the economy of Plutarch's composition. The entire *Life* (one of the longest in the series) consists of seventy-seven chapters (the pair *Alexander–Caesar* lacks a formal comparison). After the introductory first chapter, part of which has been discussed above, chapters 2 and 3 concern the parents of Alexander and the circumstances of his birth, chapter 4 tells us about his appearance and physical qualities, chapter 5 some anecdotes about his youth and tutors, chapter 6 the celebrated story of Alexander taming Bucephalas, chapter 7 retails how Aristotle became his teacher and some details regarding his teaching; this is continued in chapter 8 with a discussion of Alexander's interest in medicine, literature, and philosophy. Now we are ready for the political events, first in chapter 9 the story of Alexander's regency during Philip's absence and the machinations at court, and only then, in chapter 10, do we arrive at the murder of Philip.

Yet the differences between biography and history are not exhausted in the narrative of childhood and youth. Chapter 12 is devoted to the story of Timoclea: at the capture of Thebes one of the leaders raped the noble Timoclea and then also demanded her valuables. Timoclea managed to kill him, and when brought before Alexander she proudly told him that her brother fell at Chaeronea fighting for the liberty of the Greeks. Alexander gave her back her freedom. This story is told again, at greater length (in the present version only enough is told to show off Alexander's nobility of character), and with some variations, in Plutarch's *Mulierum virtutes* 24 (*Mor.* 259d–260d), and from a further reference (*Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 1093c) we learn that Plutarch's source for the story was Aristobulus. Now Arrian in his *Preface* expressly declares that the two main sources he is following are Aristobulus and Ptolemy, so that there is no question that he ignored the story because he was unaware of it. Thus exactly as it is the biographer's decision to report an anecdote that throws light on his hero's character, it is the historian's right to disregard a story that has little to contribute to his idea of historical narrative. The promise given by the biographer in the introductory chapter of the *Life* has been kept.

There is no need to pursue this *Life* further in detail, and suffice it to mention that in relating the eventful life of the greatest general and conqueror the world had known the biographer still finds room to discuss such matters as Alexander's daily routine, including his attitude to drink (ch. 23; this may have been not unrelated to the fact that he was writing under Trajan, who notoriously had a drinking problem), write digressions on his attitude to divinity (28) or the discovery of naphtha (35), and discuss in detail his munificence, combined with his opposition to luxury and his hunting exploits (39–40).

Another aspect of Plutarch's conception of biography concerns his selection of material and emphases in the various *Lives*. This has been well observed in Pelling's analyses ((1979)=(1995)=(2004); (1980)=(1995)) of the eight (or, more precisely, six) Late Republican *Lives* that were composed simultaneously exploiting the same source material.

These observations are particularly enlightening in instances like that comparing the *Caesar* and the *Brutus*, two *Lives* with substantial overlap in their narratives. These *Lives* had to be fashioned according to the demands of the characterization of their respective heroes and their centrality in the story: Brutus' – and the *Brutus*' – Ides of March were perforce very different from Caesar's. Indeed, these Late Republican *Lives* provide numerous examples of the ease with which the biographer manipulates his material so that he can display his character studies to best advantage. One example shall suffice: the senatorial debates of 1 Dec. 50 and 1 Jan. 49, at the outbreak of the civil war, are related at *Caesar* 30–31, *Pompey* 58–59, and *Antony* 5. As Pelling suggests ((1980)=(1995) 153), "Plutarch chose to stress different debates in different *Lives*; but, once he had made his choice, he felt free to select the most spectacular items from *either* debate, and exploit them in the single context he had imposed."

It is perhaps best to sum up here by assessing the success of the *Parallel Lives*. The reception of Plutarch will be discussed elsewhere in this volume, but here a different approach is intended. It seems fair to assume that biography (and its sub-genre autobiography) is now the most widely read kind of non-fictional literature. Present-day biography is widespread and highly popular as far as the lives of persons from the political sphere as well as those from the world of the mind, the arts, and entertainment are concerned, though perhaps the different sorts are not aimed always exactly at the same public. This great popularity must be explained, to some extent at least, not by present-day circumstances but by the need to satisfy an apparently general human curiosity. Now while ancient intellectual biography was closely related to the study and interpretation of text, and thus perforce intended for a fairly well-defined minority, the lives of those who are generally considered great men, leaders of people, may have found a much wider echo. Interestingly enough, the other great practitioner of political biography in antiquity, Suetonius, was a contemporary of Plutarch, and though as far as we know the two were probably ignorant of each other's existence, they may well have responded to a common need, perhaps connected with a general broadening of the reading public, perhaps also with a retrospective mentality brought about by the *pax Romana*. It will serve no useful purpose to repeat here the rather dogmatic analyses concerning the differences between the two biographers, grounded as it were in their different backgrounds in literary history. However, one difference should be given its due place: while Suetonius' *Caesars* drag the emperors down from their pedestals, sometimes into the sewers, Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* exalt virtues and nobility of character. Is it over-optimistic to assume that this characteristic has much to do with their continuing success to the present day?

NOTE

- 1 All translations are from the Loeb editions.

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CHAPTER 21

Kratein onomatôn

Language and Value in Plutarch

Alexei V. Zadorojnyi

... virtue has no other tool so humanitarian and akin to itself as speech (*ouden houtô philanthrôpon oude suggenes ekhousês tês aretês organon hôs ton logon*).

(*De aud. poet.* 33F)

SIMMIAS: For actually through spoken voice, as if groping in the dark (*hoion hupo skotôi dia phônês psêlaphôntes*), we recognize each other's ideas (*noêseis*) ... the verbs and nouns, which men use as tokens (*sumbolais*) between each other, and make out images and likenesses of the thoughts (*eidôla tôn nooumenôn kai eikônas*) yet do not perceive the thoughts themselves...

(*De gen.* 589B–C)

Let me start by stating the obvious. Plutarch holds that character can be captured and studied through “a phrase or a joke” (*Alex.* 1.2: *kai rhêma kai paidia tis*);¹ very many, more like the majority of his anecdotes revolve around a piece of noteworthy (insightful, witty, emotional, malapropos, outright nasty) utterance.² Anecdotal episodes as the building blocks of the Plutarchan narrative and the moral reflection behind it³ are thus strategically concerned with language on the level of such exemplary sayings (apophthegms). And there are stories that make capital out of semantic awareness *per se*. Numa falls back on comic equivocation (“Heads – of onions?”) and rapid-fire badinage (“The alive...” “Sprats!”) when haggling with Jove over human sacrifice (*Num.* 15.8–9). The women of Chios urge their men to carry on fighting despite the oath of capitulation, since for the manly type (*andri thumon ekhonti*) “cloak and shirt” in the oath clause should translate as “spear and shield” (*De mul. vir.* 245A).⁴ The defeated king Porus tells Alexander to treat him *basilikôs*, “royally,” because “in [the word] ‘royally’ everything else is included” (*en tôi basilikôs ... pant’ enesti*; *De cobib. ira* 458B).⁵ Porus’ comment must have struck a chord with Plutarch, who celebrates the notion of ideal (that is, philosophically

aligned) monarchy as the best and noblest political regime (*Num.* 20.8–12; *An seni* 790A) but equally uses the idiom of kingship to describe facets of the philosophical paradigm, such as intellect or justice (*De Alex. fort.* 336B; *Arist.* 6.2: see generally Aalders (1982) 33–34; Frazier (1993) 62–66; Pelling in this volume).⁶ So it is hardly surprising that the expansionist interpretation of *basilikôs* in the Porus anecdote is commandeered in order to assert the identically spacious semantics (“includes everything,” *pant’ enesti*) of the adverb *philosophôs*, “philosophically” (*De Alex. fort.* 332E). The riposte belongs in the declamatory tribute to Alexander the Great yet has potentially wider application across the Plutarchan macrotext.⁷

As a subscriber to a philosophical (specifically Platonic) identity, Plutarch stresses the generic philosopher’s understanding of the correlation between language and agency:

Hence the philosophers’ excellent dictum (*arista legetai*), that those who do not learn the correct perception of words mishandle their affairs too (*tous mê manthanontas orthôs akouein onomatôn kakôs khrêsthai kai tois pragmasin*). (*De Is. et Os.* 379C)

He himself frequently points out how a faulty attitude toward words meshes with unsound ethico-social mentality and activity.⁸ Such dual corrosion of the language and worldview is reflected, for instance, through the aggressive titles adopted by kings who misconstrue rule as brutal might (*Arist.* 6.2), the Roman people’s wont to “measure grandness of spirit by the bravado of one’s talk” (*Mar.* 9.4: *logou kompôi metrôn ... phronêmatos megethos*), sneering references to the intellectuals among the ignorant and *canaille* (*Cic.* 5.2; cf. *Nic.* 23.4), and generally the tendency to misvalue and misterm life’s situations (*De exil.* 607A; *De sera* 549C) and character qualities (*Anim. an corp.* 501B; fr. 161). People who come to a dinner party as “shadows” (*skiai*) of invited guests are, in the eyes of a principled Roman gentleman, on a slippery slope precisely because they do not mind (*mê duskherainousin all’ hupomenousi*) the infamy of this sobriquet (*Quaest. conv.* 707F):

For to be easily driven to the despicable by words habituates to [suchlike] actions (*prosethizei gar eis ta erga to tōi aiskhrōi rhadiōs hupo tōn rhēmatōn agesthai*).⁹

But simply switching the polarity of nomenclature will not yield positive ethical outcomes either – think of statesmen who styled themselves with the help of auspicious and princely epithets that failed to match up to their actual conduct (*De Alex. fort.* 338C).

Excessive commitment to stylistic elegance and detail is another folly that Plutarch notes as typical of a paideutically¹⁰ and, at the end of the day, philosophically deficient approach to the world when mediated through texts, whether rhetorical and literary (*De aud.* 41E, 42A; *De glor. Ath.* 350D–351A; *De vitios. pud.* 534F–535A; *Cons. uxor.* 611B; *De esu carn.* 994D) or philosophical (*De aud.* 42C–D; *De prof. virt.* 79D; *Adv. Col.* 1114D). In effect Plutarch, like many Greco-Roman philosophers, is (a) polarizing the linguistic form of discourse and its “essential” meaning, and (b) deprioritizing the former while urging us to focus on the latter (e.g. *Sen. Ep.* 108.6–7, 115.2, 18; *Epict. Disc.* 2.23.13–14 and 43–6; *Taurus ap. Gellius* 17.20.6). Thus the ideal Plutarchan reader engages with texts for the sake of moral education rather than an interesting story or beautiful diction (*De aud. poet.* 30C–D; *De prof. virt.* 79B–C) and is expected to be

glad to have from Plutarch a piece of useful advice as opposed to “declamation that strives after lovely pencraft” (*De tranq. anim.* 464E: *akroaseós ... thérómenés kalligraphian*).¹¹ Likewise Plutarch the narrator may programmatically flag up his own aversion to competitive pursuit of stylistic accomplishment:

To me, rivalry and jealousy against other [authors] over diction (*peri lexin*) is altogether small-minded and sophistic (*holós ... mikroprepes ... kai sophistikón*) ... (*Nic.* 1.4)

Yet Plutarch is by no means blasé about stylistics and language *tout court*.¹² On the contrary, he often treats locution as an interface of ethical and societal values and therefore a field rich with interpretative and didactic potential. Protagonists of the *Lives* are profiled through their rhetorical or epistolary style (e.g. *Eum.* 11.3; *Fab.* 1.7–8; *Cat. Min.* 5.3; *Ant.* 2.8; *Caes.* 50.3–4);¹³ the Elder Cato’s eschewal of foul language in the presence of his son is duly highlighted (*Cat. Mai.* 20.7). Etymologies of Greek and Latin (and Egyptian) words shore up heuristic readings in history, geography, myth, metaphysics, and what today would be called cultural anthropology (e.g. *Thes.* 33.2–3; *De cur.* 523A–B; *Dem.* 19.2; *Amat.* 758E; frs. 177–178; *Cor.* 1.6; *Quaest. Rom.* 278C, 282D–E, 286D–E, 289C–D; *De Is. et Os.* 375C–E);¹⁴ standard lexical usage (*sunêtheia*) is deployed as proof in a light-hearted erudite debate (*Quaest. conv.* 667E, 668D). A connotation may be alarmingly loaded:

with a single word (*heni rhêmati*) he [Herodotus] deprives Greece of victory and knocks down the trophy... (*De Hdt. mal.* 867F, on *drésmos*, “escape” in *Hdt.* 8.18)

While not a prime concern in terms of normative ethics, stylistic sensibility can furnish Plutarch with handy homiletic comparanda: a schoolteacher who tells off a pupil “for his tablet and pen” but not for bad grammar typifies the sham outspokenness of a flatterer who pretends to critique his patron’s oral or written composition (*Quom. adul.* 59F–60A); the development of Sophocles’ poetic idiolect provides an analogy for how people who are making philosophical “progress” express themselves (*De prof. virt.* 79B).¹⁵ In the context of literary education “it is also mandatory not to be a careless recipient of the words” (*De aud. poet.* 31D: *dei de mêde tôn onomatôn amelós akoueîn*); the audience of a lecture ought to learn from its faults, among them “poorness of thought and emptiness of wordage” (*De aud.* 40C: *dianoématos euteleia kai rhêmatos kenotês*). The premise Plutarch works from is that language should be about *significant* communication. This is surely why he is so fascinated with pithy, semantically intense statements (*De Pyth. or.* 408E–F; *Lyc.* 19–20, esp. 19.1–2; *Ages.* 14.4; *Alex.* 64.1; *De garr.* 510E–511B).¹⁶ Saliently, concision is linked with the philosophical policy on meaning:

For as Zeno used to say that a philosopher must drench in intellect the language he makes public (*dei ton philosophon eis noun apobaptonta propheresthai tēn lexin*), so Phocion’s oratory contained maximum sense in the fewest words (*pleiston en elakhistéi lexei noun*). (*Phoc.* 5.4)

While Plutarch does not come across as a practitioner of brachylogy himself, as a judge of literary style he is at his best when summing up the quality of historical narrative he disapproves via a snappy figurative remark: Ctesias’ description of the death of

Cyrus is much the same as murder “with a blunt machete” (*Artax.* 11.11); a punchline by Hegesias of Magnesia is frigid enough to extinguish (*katasbesai ... hupo psukhrias dunamenon*) the famous fire he referred to (*Alex.* 3.6); the charming but toxic storytelling of Herodotus is like “a beetle in the rose” (*De Hdt. mal.* 874B). But then Plutarch is our only source for the anecdote where Themistocles compares human speech (*ton logon ... tou anthrôpou*) to embroidered tapestries that must be unrolled for the pattern (*eidê*) to be displayed properly (*Them.* 29.4). The simile conveys Themistocles’ unease about speaking to the Persian king through an interpreter (29.5: Gera (2007) 451–453), yet also vindicates the principle of expansive and nuanced narration.

The ultimate test of the junction between language and meaning occurs in philosophical texts. Philosophy of the right kind (that is, Platonic or Platonically compatible) is special to Plutarch due to its privileged relationship with true knowledge which both underwrites and is actualized through supremely adequate linguo-stylistic practice,¹⁷ although in reality not every philosopher has a way with words (*Brut.* 2.3) or is immune to the “virus” of trendy rhetoric – even the “wonderful” Plato succumbed to Gorgias’ influence (fr. 186). The qualms are, however, outweighed by the overall merit of philosophy as discourse in which Plutarch is a stakeholder. His close reading of the Platonic text is based on the preparedness to grant that Plato’s diction and phraseology are *a priori* credible and relevant cues within a cohesive intellectual project:

the reasoning and thinking faculty [of the soul] ... he not inaptly called “wing-feather” (*ouk apo tropou pteron prosêgoreusen*), because it bears the soul upwards away from what is mortal and lowly. (*Quaest. Plat.* 1004D, cf. Pl. *Phdr.* 246d)

Lamprias ... said that Plato often teases us with words (*pollakhou men hêmin ton Platôna prospaizein dia tôn onomatôn*), but in the passages where he is blending myth with argument about the soul he exploits the meaning to the utmost (*kbrêsthai malista tôi nôî*). (*Quaest. conv.* 740B)

For at any rate he [Socrates] would not have used the name of god ironically or playfully ... (*Quaest. Plat.* 999C, on Pl. *Tht.* 150c)

Alongside the well-recognized literary excellence of Plato’s writing which is invoked through the voice of the Plutarchan Cicero (*Cic.* 24.5: “Plato’s dialogues are how Zeus would have talked if it were his nature to use language”),¹⁸ there is anticipation of solid exegetical dividends to be sought from this language. Plato’s choice of words can be traced back to his doctrine (*Quaest. Plat.* 1000E–1001B; *De Is. et Os.* 373F: Hirsch-Luipold (2002) 128–129);¹⁹ the very obliqueness and obscurity of Platonic expression (*Quaest. conv.* 740B–C, 745B–C, F; *De def. or.* 426F–427A, cf. 420F; *De Is. et Os.* 370F; *Prae. ger. reip.* 820A) is seen not so much as a barrier to meaning (yet note, again, fr. 186!), but as a stimulus to active construal of cosmological or ethical concepts.²⁰

Wordage and style are anything but irrelevant for the task of broadcasting and negotiating philosophy.²¹ In fact, to Plutarch an equitable and fruitful relationship between language and reason is a problem that extends beyond interpretation, whether friendly or polemical, of philosophical texts. As an author with a great deal of experience in dissemination of philosophical advice to educated but non-specialist audiences, he understands the importance of tapping into and harnessing the cultural habits of his well-educated readership (Van Hoof (2010) *passim*; Pelling (2011) 55–57). A passage in

the *Platonic Problems* casually yet trenchantly implies that appraisal of literary diction is a familiar, almost taken-for-granted exercise within Plutarch's paideutic community (the first person plural²² is a giveaway!):

This is why we routinely (*eiôthamen*) praise or criticize poets and prose authors with phrases like "X uses Attic nouns and elegant verbs" or the other way round, "pedestrian." (1010C)

The reference to "Attic nouns" recalls the dominant textual aesthetics of Plutarch's life-world, for he lived through the first decades of the Second Sophistic – a period when fluency in the vocabulary, grammar, and stylistic know-how of Attic and more broadly the classical literary canon was a key socio-cultural benchmark.²³ To Plutarch, a good standard of Greek is a basic prerequisite:

in speech, not to solecize is not amazing, while to solecize is ridiculous ... (*en logois to mé soloikizein ou thaumaston, alla to soloikizein katagelaston*) (fr. 91)

Philosophical textuality is subject to similar quality controls. A legitimate critique of Plato's "terminological muddle" (*onomatôn ... sugkhuseôs*) might have come from people whose "usage of Greek is more correct and expression more pure" (*tois akribesteron hellênizousi... kai katharôteron dialegomenois*), which his Epicurean detractors are obviously not (*Adv. Col.* 1116E). Plato's texts are of course first-rate Attic literature; when Plutarch argues that one should learn more from it than merely *lexis* (*De prof. virt.* 79D, cf. *De aud.* 42D), he is not discouraging but drawing on the stylistic enthusiasm of his elite contemporaries.²⁴ The Plutarchan pedagogical and writerly method certainly allows for an element of literary indulgence, provided it does not interfere with the metanarrative of normative values. A kind of happy synthesis between wholesome content and attractive stylistic packaging is both possible and welcome:

Yet, if the delightful is also present in the persuasive (*tôi peithonti kai to terpon enesti*) due to the nature of the example, then the text does not flee from charm as its partner in exposition (*ou pheugei kharin apodeixeôs sunergon ho logos*). (*De mul. vir.* 243A)²⁵

[Cicero] demonstrated above all to the Romans how much pleasure speech adds to the fine (*hoson hedonês logos tõi kalôi prostithêsi*), and that justice is unbeatable if it is correctly verbalized (*an orthôs legêtai*). (*Cic.* 13.1)

To what extent does Plutarch achieve such a balance in his own writing? On the whole, his style (disclaimers notwithstanding, in particular *De tranq. anim.* 464E) is unostentatiously genteel – that is, copious and circumstantial, with a penchant for synonyms and abstracts as well as for subtle narrative patterning, and saturated with classical vocabulary, allusiveness, and metaphors.²⁶ So would it be right to see Plutarch's macrotext as an experiment in agreeable philosophical poetics?²⁷ His work was apparently received along these lines by some readers in antiquity. The fourth-century historian and biographer Eunapius dubs Plutarch "Aphrodite and lyre of all philosophy" (*hê philosophias hapasês aphroditê kai lura*; VS 454); "Aphrodite" is a recurrent sobriquet for beautiful prose (e.g. Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 3; Eunap. VS 473, 501), and the brevity of Eunapius' salute suggests that such an opinion of Plutarch is quite conventional.

Needless to say, Eunapius' optimistic assessment overlooks the multiple tensions that run through the Plutarchan stance on the role of style and language in the creation as well as consumption of text. The disavowal of literary rivalry with Thucydides in the proem of the *Nicias* (1.1, 1.4–5), for example, does not rule out the delicately Thucydidean flavor of a gnome later in the *Life* (11.9: “fortune is a matter unreckonable and not rationally comprehensible,” *akriton d' hē tukhē pragma kai alēpton logismōi*). Glossing dialect words in poetry is “scholarly and not unpleasant” (*philologon kai ouk aêdes*) but not “necessary and useful” for a values-centered study of literature (*De aud. poet.* 22C–D: Hunter and Russell (2011) 125–126), and yet Plutarch seeks to reallocate a Hesiodic verse (*Op.* 220) by translating *rhothos*, “noise” as Boeotian for “steep mountainous track” (fr. 34). In the domain of philosophical polemics Plutarch casts himself as a non-quibbler (*De Stoic. rep.* 1038E: “lest I am thought to be picking at words,” *mē doxô tôn onomatôn epilambanesthai*) and disdains the Epicurean Colotes not least because he “cavils at expression ... and indicts the phrasing, not the essence of the argument” (*Adv. Col.* 1114D: *sukophantôn ek tēs phônês ... kai tōi rhēmati diôkôn ou tōi pragmati ton logon*). Still, Plutarch is capable of zooming in polemically on a single word in Epicurus (fr. 124) – a move that strikes Aulus Gellius, whose quotation has preserved the Plutarchan passage (*NA* 2.9.4), as “too pedantic and almost frosty ... word-hunting” (*nimis minute ac prope etiam subfrigide ... lexithērei*). The Stoic Chrysippus, in turn, gets stick for his position on correctness of language use (*De Stoic. rep.* 1047A–B): it is inconsistent, argues Plutarch, to recommend well-ordered speech but to make little of “obscurities, incomplete sentences, and solecisms.” Even through Plutarch's biased paraphrase it is clear that Chrysippus ranks correct language below the language users' “adherence to the better course” (*tou beltionos ekhomenous*), which is not fundamentally different from Plutarch's own customary insistence that meaning must come before wording. And let us not forget that for a champion of meaning over *lexis* Plutarch is impressively good with words!

The tensions summarized above are too grave and overarching to be viewed as yet another Plutarchan “contradiction” (as explored by Nikolaidis (1991)). How can Plutarch combine sophisticated praxis of language with devaluation of language? To Donald Russell, there is no “paradox” here; writers such as Plutarch or Seneca are natural insiders of a highly advanced verbal (rhetorical and literary) culture, therefore “all they are saying, when they speak as philosophers, is that they claim to put sense first” (Russell (1973) 21). But Russell's explanation fails to take into account the totalizing impact of philosophy as discursal and social persona in the Greco-Roman world (e.g. Hahn (1989) *passim*; Trapp (2007a) 2, 20 and (2007b) 5–6); a self-professed philosopher of Plutarch's or Seneca's caliber can ill afford to produce texts that are visibly at odds with the intellectual framework necessitated by his ideal identity qua philosopher. Taken in this light, Plutarch's outlook on the linguo-stylistic texture of *paideia* is seemingly unstable, not because he sometimes tackles it philosophically and sometimes as a “lay” polyhistor-cum-wordsmith, but because as a partaker of the philosophical *logos* he is equipped with a set of sufficiently flexible constraints over his communication strategy. Words are instrumental in relaying knowledge and virtue (*De aud. poet.* 33 F) and bringing about the appropriate psychogogic effect (e.g. *Per.* 15.2; *Dem.* 18.2, 22.6) – hence, there is all the more reason to have them at one's fingertips aplenty and in premium condition. Style and readerly pleasure are not a priority of the Plutarchan text, yet it

“does not flee from charm” either (*De mul. vir.* 243A: *ou pheugei kharin ... ho logos*). Tellingly, the accusative *kharin* (as opposed to *kharita*) is the form explicitly endorsed by pundits of Atticism²⁸ – a serendipitous reminder of the synergy between literary “charm” and prestigious linguistic routine.

Plutarch’s philosophy of language and verbal communication has to be jigsawed together from his assorted ruminations and comments across the corpus. He defines language, *en passant*, as “utterance in sound that signifies thought” (*De anim. procr.* 1026A: *lexis en phônēi sēmantikēi dianoias*, trans. H. Cherniss). He does not, however, appear to be very fond of the more hardcore theoretical questions about the relationship between language and intellect. Thus, the distinction between “immanent speech” (*endiathetos logos*) and “external” speech is dismissively referred to as “stale” (*Max. cum princ.* 777B–C: *heōlon*; Van der Stockt (1990) 188–190 and (1992) 61); the denial of predication by Stilpon of Megara (fourth century BCE) is downplayed as a piece of dialectical sport, “to tease the sophists” (*Adv. Col.* 1119C–1120B: Döring (1972) 154–155; Opsomer (2013) § 37ff.); the problem of language use among animals, despite Plutarch’s strong interest in animals and animal rationality, is largely neglected.²⁹ Instead, Plutarch is attached to the idea of language as a medium of social-cognitive interchange.³⁰ The primary function of speech is to enable humanity to confer about their doings.³¹

it is likely that men first felt the need of language and articulate sound when they wished to designate and mark out to one another the deeds and doers and the affected party and what they undergo (*eikos anthrōpous en khreiai logou to prōton genesthai, tas te praxeis kai tous prattontas autas kai ta pathē kai tous paskhontas allēlois diasaphein kai aposēmainein boulomenous*). (*Quaest. Plat.* 1009D, trans. H. Cherniss, modified)

Words operate like coinage for carrying out semantic transactions (*De Pyth. or.* 406B–C, cf. *Lyc.* 19.2; *Phoc.* 5.6; *De def. or.* 421A: Van der Stockt (1990) 184–186, (1992) 59; Garriga (2005)). In the essay *Against Talkativeness* Plutarch advocates an audience-centered ethic of speech as a resource of sociability (504E: “the most gratifying and humanitarian voucher,” *hēdiston ... kai philanthrōpotaton sumbolaion*) that must not be abusively wasted (ibid., 514E–F, 503B).³² Language is also a resource, most often literally “tool,” for the purposes of political and legal debate (“tool,” *organon*: *Prae. ger. reip.* 802B; *Per.* 8.1; *Fab.* 1.7; *Cic.* 4.4, 32.6; *Comp. Arist.-Cato* 2.5, cf. *Cat. Min.* 4.3; “flight feathers,” *ókuptera*: *T.-G. Gr.* 22.3; “base camp,” *hormêtérion*: *Comp. Arist.-Cato* 1.4) and thereby an intrinsic aspect of the Plutarchan model of statesmanship:

...oratory as a second body and a well-nigh mandatory tool of noble things for a man who is not going to live in obscurity and idleness (*ton de logon hōsper deuteron sōma kai tōn kalōn mononouk anagkaion organon andri mē tapeinōs biōsomenōi mēd’ apraktōs*). (*Cat. Mai.* 1.5)³³

The language-based art of diplomacy can deliver substantial political results without bloodshed (*Pyrrh.* 14.2–3; *Flam.* 2.5; *Num.* 12.6; *Marc.* 22.5, 22.10); castigation by the general hurts the soldiers “no less than wounds” (*Marc.* 25.10).

Yet the integrity and efficacy of communication through language are far from assured. Liars, demagogues, and sophists are professionally reliant on manipulation of language, but even a member of Plutarch’s circle may try to “cloak absurdity with gracious terms”

(*De fac.* 921 F: *tên atopian euphêmois periampekheis onomasin*: cf. *Quaest. conv.* 741 C). Brilliant style deceives and “bedazzles” (*De aud.* 41 C); Herodotus’ *lexis* and narrative are enjoyable (*De Hdt. mal.* 854 E), but this is camouflage for his renegade opinions (855 A, 874 B–C, esp. 863 E); a suspect argument is “a verbal potion” (*Bruta an.* 985 E: *kukeôna logôn*); the “coinage” trope throws into relief the callous scheming of Hellenistic kings (*Pyrrh.* 12.4). Outspokenness (*parrhêsia*) and euphemistic parlance are two areas of discourse which Plutarch scrutinizes with extra care: *parrhêsia* is problematic because it could be faked (*Quom. adul.* 59 B–60 D; *De vitios. pud.* 536 A; *De Hdt. mal.* 856 D; *Ant.* 24.12) or become offensive and inopportune (*Quom. adul.* 66 E–70 B: Van Meirvenne (2002); Whitmarsh (2006a)), whereas euphemisms might be well meant and blameless (e.g. *De frat. am.* 483 A; *Quom. adul.* 56 C–D, 73 E–74 A; *De aud.* 44 F–45 A; *Rom.* 13.6) but are perhaps more likely to point toward some ethico-political hypocrisy or misconception (*Quom. adul.* 56 B–E; *Cam.* 33.4; *Sol.* 15.2; *Alc.* 16.4; *De cohib. ira* 462 F; *De vitios. pud.* 529 D–E; fr. 161; *An seni* 796 A).

Deception and cynicism aside, Plutarch envisages a deficiency at the core of all linguistic transmission. A bona fide verbal message is only a surrogate for the cognitive data; without direct access to the latter we have to deal with words as “images and likenesses of thoughts” and “grope darkly” (*hupo skotôi ... psêlaphôntes*) toward each other’s insights (*De gen.* 589 B–C: Van der Stockt (1990) 184, (1992) 57–58; further Hirsch-Luipold (2002) 30–39). Language facilitates traffic in meaning but at the same time bears witness to the insecurity and limitedness of human knowledge. And if we use figured language, the process of cognitive transmission is complicated further; trope-enriched phrases that overstep the threshold of pukka denotation may call for an excuse:

if truth ought to be said by way of a metaphor (*ei dei metaphorai <khrêsamenon> to alêthes*
eipên ... (*Pel.* 13.7)³⁴

In the *Oracles of Pythia* positive spin is put on the providentially engineered oracular obscurity in olden times (*De Pyth. or.* 407 E: cf. *De Is. et Os.* 354 C), but otherwise the shift away from extravagant and opaque poetic locution toward prosaic clarity in Greece’s collective discourse (406 E–407 B) is seen as a definite plus³⁵ – importantly, it was the “lucid and instructive” that philosophy was quick to “embrace” (406 E: *to saphes kai didaskalikon aspasamenê*).³⁶ More transparent linguistic signs are preferable then, but this is not enough to annul the paramount dichotomy between language and thought (*De gen.* 589 B–C), which looms large over every act of verbal communication. Plutarch’s pessimism about language as a medium for semantic underachievement manifests itself, for example, in the claim that even the Homeric vocabulary could not cope with the diversity of color in the landscape (*De fac.* 934 F), or in the allegation, voiced by the Platonist teacher Ammonius, that an ontologically valid statement is impossible within the temporal structure of language (*De E* 392 E–F).³⁷

Plutarch is clearly preoccupied with the awkward status of language *vis-à-vis* reality in the more factual and political sense. Narrative is by default secondary to the narrated events (*De glor. Ath.* 345 E–F, 347 E, with 346 E–F), and fiction is accordingly inferior to historiography (348 A–B); a witty one-liner cannot disguise a shameful piece of action (*Artax.* 22.5); Greek language withers away in a barbarian environment (*De fac.* 941 C; *Quaest. Rom.* 269 A). In many Plutarchan episodes we observe the impotence of words

when set against hands-on experience, genuine endeavor, or overpowering authority (e.g. *Phoc.* 9.6; *Aem.* 13.6; *Pyrrh.* 16.2; *Dion* 11.3; *Artax.* 5.2; *Reg. apophth.* 172D); political pressure can stop philosophical speech (*Phoc.* 27.3–4). For all that, words are known to trigger major and bitter repercussions. People take grave umbrage at jibes (*Tim.* 32.4; *Cic.* 5.6, 27.1); Plato’s aphoristic warning about “the heaviest punishment for the lightest thing – words” (skillful conflation of *Leg.* 935a and 717c–d) is quoted on four separate occasions (*De garr.* 505C; *Quaest. conv.* 634E–F; *De cohib. ira* 456E; *De cap. ex inim.* 90C); another favorite catchphrase zeroes in on the tongue (*glōtta*) itself as the organ that is simultaneously “the best and the worst” (*De garr.* 506C; fr. 89; *Conv. sept. sap.* 146F; *De aud.* 38B);³⁸ the need for sociable and political discretion of speech is illustrated with numerous stories of ill-timed or provocative verbal conduct (e.g. *De garr.* 505B–C, 508E–F; *Quom. adul.* 68A–B; *Reg. apophth.* 175C). The solution Plutarch is prone to advertise as the safest as well as the most dignified is actually to keep silent (*De garr.* 503C; *De cap. ex inim.* 90B; fr. 89)! Silence is thus subsumed under socio-political utility,³⁹ yet there is more than pragmatism to this. Reticence fits in with the intellectual posture wherein internalization of values comes first, as exemplified by Epaminondas:

My father said with a smile, “Such is his temper, friend – taciturn and cautious with words but insatiable of learning and listening (*siôpêlon kai pros tous logous eulabes, aplêston de tou manthanein kai akroasthai*).” (*De gen.* 592 F)

Restraint in utterances about the divine is prudently pious (*De Is. et Os.* 378C) and in line with esoteric traditions (e.g. *Quaest. conv.* 728E–F: Van Nuffelen (2007)). A student of Plato’s Academy is assumed to live “searching for the silent good” (*Dion* 14.3: *to siôpômenon agathon zêtein*), which is not necessarily an allusion to any secret Platonic teaching but rather an echo of the (feasibly Platonic) conviction that the dialogue between the self and truth somehow does not depend on language (Zadorojnyi (2011) 156 n. 42).

Indeed, language is not indispensable both in socio-political contexts and metaphysically. Communication may take place through gestures⁴⁰ and wordless symbolic performance (e.g. *Tim.* 11.3; *Alex.* 65.6–8; *Cic.* 17.3; *Pomp.* 25.11; *De garr.* 511B–C: “explaining what is needed through signs, without talk,” *symbolikôs aneu phônês ha dei phrazontes*) – in fact the adage about the ambivalent power of the tongue (see above) dates back to just such a performance by one of the Seven Sages. Cicero’s decision *not* to deliver his speech against Verres proves a winning tactic (*Cic.* 7.4–5);⁴¹ Marius’ non-response to a greeting is a prompt (*symbolon*) for his bodyguards to kill that person on the spot (*Mar.* 43.6). From the theological perspective, language is effectively a compromise between divine sovereignty and human cognitive perception; the godhead is not beholden to language (*De Is. et Os.* 381B)⁴² and has the option to communicate without speech (*De gen.* 588D–E, 589B–C; *Quaest. conv.* 728 F).⁴³

In the twentieth century Ludwig Wittgenstein famously described philosophy as a linguo-semantic enterprise:

It will signify what cannot be said by presenting clearly what can be said (*Sie wird das Unsagbare bedeuten, indem sie das Sagbare klar darstellt*). (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.115)

At the risk of enraging true Wittgensteinians out there, I submit that it would not be entirely unfair to think of Plutarch as a proto-Wittgensteinian *avant la lettre*. On the one hand, he is acutely conscious of the limitations and pitfalls of language in the experience of humanity, and beyond; he campaigns for succinct locution and silence. He remains, however, committed to the idea of education through philosophically suffused text (e.g. *Max. cum princ.* 779B–C; *De aud. poet.* 15A–B; *Aem.* 1.1, 1.5; *Demetr.* 1.5–6) and interpretative scrutiny of others' speech ("a word or a joke," *Alex.* 1.2). Philosophy, to Plutarch, is not about giving up on language. Nor does he believe that to radically innovate in language and defamiliarize it is the best philosophical practice (*Adv. Col.* 1112F–1113B; *Comm. not.* 1073B–C).⁴⁴ Plutarch's method is to stimulate reflection and learning through engagement with the available stock of linguistic material – with the baggage of *das Sagbare*, as it were. The Plutarchan macrotext banks on the readers' cognizance, or better grasp, of evaluative ethico-political vocabulary ("harshness," "mildness," "love of honor," "moderation")⁴⁵ and associative imagery (e.g. the mirror simile in *Aem.* 1.1);⁴⁶ etymologies are put to work, as are nicknames,⁴⁷ polysemy (e.g. *Num.* 15.8–9; *De vit. pud.* 528E), and puns (e.g. *Pomp.* 14.9: *to endoxon ek tou paradoxou*, literally "esteem from the unusual"), and general wordplay. Plutarch likes to literalize and re-literalize; for instance, the idiomatic expression "kick in the belly" (*Luc.* 11.2) converts into a slogan of polemics against the Epicureans (*Non posse* 1087B), alluding to their supposed fixation on sensual pleasures emblemized by "the belly" (1087D); frigid writing could quench fire (*Alex.* 3.6); Ammonius wraps up a dinner party conversation about flower garlands with facetious feedback:

Ammonius said with a smile that such many-colored and flowery discourse (*poikilon boutō kai anthéron logon*) should not to be kicked aside, like a garland. (*Quaest. conv.* 648B)

It is observable and hardly surprising that Plutarch's verbal (semantic, rhetorical) artistry is referential to a high degree, in that units of language communicate the Plutarchan message by displaying contiguity with certain register(s) of socio-cultural memory and/or embeddedness in the historical context. To take yet more liberty with Wittgenstein's formula, *das Sagbare* in Plutarch is willy-nilly slanted toward *das Gesagte* ("what has been said"): recyclable terms and tropes, proverbs, nicknames, overt or latent quotations, verbal humor – the list can go on. There are special words suited to energize and channel inter- and intratextual apprehension. Alcibiades is momentarily juxtaposed with the Platonic Socrates through the gadfly simile (*muōps*; *Alc.* 21.8 ~ *Pl. Ap.* 30e; Verdegem (2010) 257 n. 121); in the *Life* of Dion, the word "dust" (*koniortos*) contributes to a contrast between dramatic battle narrative (46.4) and an earlier, peaceful scene of study (13.2), and creates as well an additional link between the *Life* and Plato's *Republic* (496d–e; Zadorojnyi (2011) 151).

Plutarch conceives of a two-way reversible relationship between language and reality: one can learn the "names," *onomata*, from "things," *pragmata*, or vice versa (*Dem.* 2.3). What matters, in the final analysis, is to explore and appreciate the reciprocity between words and their denotata; even if language is epistemologically finite, there is much and manifold knowledge to be gained from studying these semantic matches and mismatches. On the level of *historia*, events give life to phraseology (e.g. *Thes.* 29.3; *Rom.* 15.2–3); toponymy dovetails with political past (e.g. the River Haemon, "Bloody": *Dem.* 19.2; the village Gaugamela, "Camel's Home": *Alex.* 31.7); historical scenarios are punctuated

with homonymic omens (e.g. *Nic.* 13.6: priestess Hesychia, “Peace”; *Aem.* 10.6–8: pet dog Perseus); namesakes of a great hero such as Alexander are susceptible to being benchmarked against his excellence (*De Alex. fort.* 334A; *Alex.* 58.5); the story of Hannibal’s deadpan jesting at his officer Gisco (*Fab.* 15.2–4; Sonnabend (2002) 167) showcases how well-timed declaration of the uniqueness of the referent can be a hugely successful rhetorical gambit. In philosophical writing the semantic stakes are higher:

we are startled that ... “good men” is merely a title and an expression (*agathoi d’ andres onomazontai kai legontai monon*), like “Centaurs,” “Giants” or “Cyclopes.” (*An virt. doc.* 439A–B)⁴⁸

Virtue communicates through language (*De aud. poet.* 33F) but is itself caught in a verbal quandary – should it be posited as the one master-referent of all its varied nomenclature (*De virt. mor.* 440E–441B)? And is the all-inclusive adverb “philosophically” (*De Alex. fort.* 332E) the magic key to normative values or a linguistic black hole? The totality of philosophical life was realized by Socrates (*An seni* 796D–E), who managed to “hold sway over words” (*De gen.* 582C: *kratein onomatôn*) and to reach beyond human verballity; Plutarch’s readership have very big sandals to fill.⁴⁹

NOTES

- 1 Further variations on this programmatic postulate are assembled by Duff (1999) 15–16 n. 6; note especially *De Alex. fort.* 330E: “the character ... souls foreground most of all through the sayings” (*ta ... êthê ... malista tais phônais hai psukhai proballousin*) and *Cat. Mai.* 7.3: “I think that human character is revealed more by the speech than by the face” (*tôi logôi polu mallon ê tõi prosopôi ... tôn anthrôpôn phamen emphainesthai to êthos*).
- 2 Which is also valid for the ancient anecdotes across the board: cf. Dillon (2004) 185; Goldhill (2009) 100–112.
- 3 Stadter (1996); Beck (2000); further, Schmitt Pantel (2008).
- 4 Cf. Polyæn. *Strat.* 8.66, where the linguistic element is even more prominent: “to claim that it is their custom to call (*hôs ethos autois ... kalein*) the spear ‘cloak.’”
- 5 Also *De Alex. fort.* 332E; *Alex.* 60.14; *Reg. apophth.* 181E.
- 6 Cf. the parallel drawn by Apuleius (*Flor.* 7.9–10) between Alexander’s decree and philosophy as “the royal ordinance” (*disciplinam regalem*) for discourse and life. Plutarch also calls the study of “ancient” (philosophical) arguments “a pastime most regal” (*basilikôtatên diatribên*; *Adv. Col.* 1107E).
- 7 A term introduced by D’Ippolito (1991); cf. Pelling (2010) on the *Lives* as “global history.”
- 8 This diagnosis has illustrious classical roots: see Too (2006) 109–114.
- 9 I follow the emendation to the Greek text proposed by Teodorsson (1996) 91.
- 10 Cf. *De cur.* 520F–521A; *Quom. adul.* 60A.
- 11 Van der Stockt (1996a) 265–266. *Kalligraphia* in Plutarch is a term for lush literary (poetic) produce (*Con. praec.* 146A; *Quaest. conv.* 683E) as well as for fine handwriting (e.g. *De Pyth. or.* 397C); signally, rejection of the latter could serve to emphasize an ancient philosopher’s total commitment to meaning at the expense of expression – cf. Porph. *Vita Plot.* 8.
- 12 The approach taken by Epictetus (*Disc.* 2.23.25–31 and 46) makes for an apposite comparison.
- 13 Pelling (2002) 339–340. Sizing up an individual on the basis of “words and character” is perfectly ordinary, cf. *De Pyth. or.* 395A (*kai ton logon kai to êthos*), *De cap. ex inim.* 88B. The Plutarchan refusal to compare Demosthenes and Cicero as orators (*Dem.* 3.1) is something of a red herring: see Billault (2001) and esp. *Comp. Dem.-Cic.* 1.4.

- 14 On Plutarch's etymologies see Strobach (1997) 55–141, esp. 55–68; also García Valdés (1991); Martos Montiel (1994); the exegetic and philosophical impetus behind the Plutarchan etymologies is lucidly analyzed by Hirsch-Luipold (2002) 147–151.
- 15 On this difficult passage, see Pinnoy (1984); Van der Stockt (1992) 62–72; Martínez Hernández (2005) 96–97; Roskam (2005) 270–271; Pelling (2007).
- 16 Cf. Van der Stockt (1990) 187; Kim (2009) 493. On the *Against Talkativeness*, see recently Van Hoof (2010) 151–175; König (2010) 328–330.
- 17 Socrates as the paradigmatic out-and-out philosopher (*An seni* 796D–E) is a formidable operator of language – “a top conversationalist and master of words” (*De gen.* 582C: *akrou dialegesthai kai kratein onomatôn*).
- 18 And Aristotle's oeuvre is, according to Cicero, “a river of liquid gold” (ibid.); cf. Cic. *Brut.* 121 and *Acad. Pr.* 119 respectively. The slippage from the Ciceronian “if [Zeus] talked Greek” (*si Graece loquatur*) to “if it were his nature to use language” (*ei logôî khrêsthai pephuken*) in Plutarch's *Cicero* may not be accidental: for Plutarch, Greek is of course *the* language of culture and philosophy – at the very least, it is a facilitating factor of education (*De Alex. fort.* 328B–C).
- 19 While Plato's dichotomist ideas on the parts of speech are defended by Plutarch in the tenth *Platonic Question* (1009B–1011E); see Wouters (1996).
- 20 On the attitude toward “unclearly” (*asapheia*) among ancient philosophical commentators, see generally Barnes (1992) 267–274; Mansfeld (1994) 23–26, 155–159; Ferrari (2001) 530–533; Karamanolis (2006) 204 n. 32.
- 21 Compare, again, Epictetus, *Disc.* 2.23.25: “expressive ability has some value too (*esti tis axia kai tês phrastikês dunameôs*), but it is not of the same size as that of the moral purpose,” and esp. 40: “instruction must needs take place ... through certain wording” (*anagkê de tèn paradusin ginesthai ... dia lexeôs poias*).
- 22 On Plutarch's use of “we,” amongst other tactics for engineering solidarity with the narratees, see Pelling (2002) 269, 272–273, 276, 278 = (2004) 405–406, 411–413, 420–421; Van Hoof (2010) 53–54, 93, 130, 143–144, 162, 167, 196–197.
- 23 E.g. Ael. Arist. 1.326: Attic language is universally regarded as “the territory of culture” (*horon ... paideias*). See Swain (1996) 19–56; Whitmarsh (2005) 41–56; Kim (2010); for broader discussion of literary classicism in antiquity see Porter (2006a).
- 24 Cf. Van der Stockt (2006) 1038–1039 on the veiled acknowledgment of the Asianism–Atticism controversy in *Prae. ger. reip.* 802E–F. In fr. 186 “true-born” Atticism is defined as “clear and plain” style (*to saphe kai liton gnêsion einai Attikismon*). For Plutarch's acquaintance with the contemporary rhetorical scene, see Frazier (2000).
- 25 See Van der Stockt (1996a) 266–272. It is worth pondering to what extent this programmatic statement is applicable to the *Parallel Lives*; cf. Duff (1999) 36–37.
- 26 See Russell (1973) 20–41 and forthcoming; Hunter and Russell (2011) 21–25; Brenk (1992) 4426–4438; Moles (1988) 6, 12–16; Yaginuma (1992); Torraca (1998); Baldassari (2000); Teodorsson (2000) and (2005); Schmidt (2000); Larmour (2000); Duff (2010) 219–223.
- 27 Notably, Plutarch draws attention to the rhetorical charisma of Carneades (*Cat. Mai.* 22.2–3) and Antiochus (*Cic.* 4.1); both these philosophers belong to the Platonic tradition.
- 28 Esp. Moeris, *Lexicon* s.v. *kharin*; cf. Pollux, *Lexicon* 5.140–142. See Pérez Molina (1994) for a survey of Plutarch's vocabulary against that of Atticist lexicographers.
- 29 Mossman (2005) 148; pace Santese (2005) 453, 457–458 and Newmyer (2006) 46–47. The more or less relevant texts are: *De esu carn.* 994E; *Non posse* 1091C–D; *Adv. Col.* 1125B–C; *De virt. mor.* 443B; *De soll. an.* 972F–973A; *Quaest. conv.* 713B; *Marc.* 28.3. Aesop is said to understand the speech of birds (*Conv. sept. sap.* 152D), yet this is probably meant ironically, cf. *De Hdt. mal.* 871D.
- 30 Van der Stockt (1990) 181: “if one were to ask the right question to Plutarch concerning his thoughts on language, that question should be: ‘How does language function in human society and how should it operate?’”

- 31 For comparable ancient theories about the origins of language, see Gera (2003) 158–166.
- 32 See Van der Stockt (1990) 186–187, (1992) 59–60; Van Hoof (2010) 155–157, 172–173. It is scarcely possible to speculate about the contents of the lost treatise *On Tautology* (no. 165 Lamprias Catalogue).
- 33 Further, Pelling (2002) 339–347.
- 34 See Hirsch-Luipold (2002) 126–128 on this passage and similar caveats in *Quaest. conv.* 692E (where the speaker is a sophist) and *De tuen. san.* 135E.
- 35 Van der Stockt (1990) 192–194, (1992) 74–83; Toye (2000); more cautious is Whitmarsh (2006b) 364–365.
- 36 Yet compare *De aud.* 47B: beginners struggle with philosophy’s “tacky and unfamiliar” (*gliskhron ... kai asunêthes*) language and topics.
- 37 Cf. the attack on the Stoic analysis of time in *Comm. not.* 1081D–1082D.
- 38 *Glôtta* (tongue/language) is an endemic double entendre in Greek: e.g. *Vita Aesopi* (G) 53; Dio Chr. 66.6; Opsomer (2013) § 39–40.
- 39 Pointedly, secrecy is espoused via forceful military metaphors, such as “garrison” (*Quaest. Rom.* 279A) or “generalship of silence” (*De garr.* 506E).
- 40 Yet gestures are liable to deliberate misreading too: e.g. *T. Gr.* 19.2–3.
- 41 Plutarch’s highly impressionistic account of the trial of Verres is designed to bring out the paradox of the rhetorical potency of an oratorical non-event; cf. Moles (1988) 157.
- 42 Language to Plutarch is contingent on physicality – even for “the soul or the deity” articulate speech is exclusively possible by means of a “body-vehicle kitted out with lingual parts” (*Cor.* 38.3: *sômatos organikou kai diêrmosmenou meresi logikois*).
- 43 Whereas humankind may never transcend language: according to Zoroastrian eschatology (*De Is.* 370B), the post-apocalyptic people will “all speak the same tongue” (*homoglôssôn hapantôn genesthai*). Curiously, another monoglot utopia in Plutarch is the Roman empire: Latin “is used by almost all men nowadays” (*Quaes. Pl.* 1010D *nun homou ti pantes anthrôpoi khrôntai*; Swain (1996) 42 n. 68), but this pronouncement is perhaps tongue-in-cheek; cf. *Dem.* 2.2–4, with Zadorojnyi (2006) 105 n. 14.
- 44 Unless one is in the situation of Cicero who undertook the challenge of rendering Greek philosophical terminology wholesale into Latin: *Cic.* 40.2.
- 45 See e.g. Bucher-Isler (1972); Panagopoulos (1977); Frazier (1996) 173–273; Duff (1999) 72–94; Ahlrichs (2005); Pelling (2005); Stadter (2011).
- 46 Zadorojnyi (2010); further Frazier (2011). The fullest inventory of images in Plutarch is still Fuhrmann (1964).
- 47 Which not only telescope contemporary feelings about the person in question (e.g. *Per.* 27.4; *Dem.* 4.5–8; *Aem.* 8.3; *Cic.* 17.2–4), but can unlock profound insights into character as well (*Per.* 39.2).
- 48 Cf. the anti-Epicurean defense of the “sayables” (*lekta*) as a vital dimension of religiosity and of understanding in general: *Adv. Col.* 1119E–F; Boulogne (2003) 133–137.
- 49 I would like to thank Mark Beck for his enormous patience and constructive criticism while this chapter was in preparation; one cannot wish for a better editor. Special thanks are due, as so often, to Christopher Pelling.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Useful synoptic discussion of Plutarch's key passages on language is found in Van der Stockt (1990) and (1992) ch. 2; I have not seen O. Göldi, *Plutarchs sprachliche Interessen* (Zurich, 1922). Strobach (1997) takes stock of Plutarch's etymologies and knowledge of languages other than Greek. On Plutarch's stylistic practice, Russell (1973) ch. 2 and (forthcoming) are valuable; compact coverage in Moles (1988) 6 and 12–16 is priceless; there are several relevant contributions in Van der Stockt (2000); Pelling (2004) = (2002) ch. 12 is seminal work on Plutarch's maneuvers as narrator. Larmour (2000) and especially Hirsch-Luipold (2002) offer invigorating analysis of Plutarch's approach to images and signs; for a catalogue (somewhat shambolic) of Plutarchan imagery describing various aspects of language itself, see Fuhrmann (1964) 196–203.

CHAPTER 22

Compositional Methods in the *Lives*

Luc Van der Stockt

1. “Compositional Methods” and Classical Hermeneutics

“Composition” is a key term in the analysis of the process of interpreting any work of art, be it visual, architectural, musical, or literary: in the interpretation of a work of art, understanding its “composition” is of vital importance. For all those arts are productive: they produce artifacts that are perceptible with the senses, and all those products in some or other way reveal “composition.” This composition must largely consist in, or be the effect of, a conscious operation; if not, the product cannot be artful (Scaglione (1994) 301), since artful production is by definition a methodical production going according to a well-reasoned plan (Lausberg (1990) # 1–2; Shaw (1972) 88). The artifact that results from this productive process will, however, also reveal elements or aspects that, as part of the artist’s tradition, manifest themselves without him being aware of that living tradition.

It is clear, then, that the term “composition” can have several meanings (see also Brown (1993) 462). Apart from (a) the general notion of “artifact” (e.g. “a piece of writing”), we mostly understand the term as pointing to (b) “the structure” of an artistic work as *the result* of the act of composing parts into a unified whole. This is the external, architectonic design ordering parts (strophes, chapters, acts, etc.) according to certain principles, such as unity, or contrast, or opposition, and the like (Bantel (1962) 43). But, as indicated above, “composition” can also refer to (c) the *conscious act* of composing itself. In this sense, the term refers to the adroit application of the principles of artistic production in view of a particular goal, to operating according to the rules of an art in order to create and convey a particular message.

Let us now narrow the scope to the interpretation of texts as artistic artifacts, and to composition in Plutarch’s *Lives*. Classical hermeneutics holds that, in order to appreciate

the originality of a text, one should confront each and every of its constituents with its “tradition” (Babilas (1961) 51–52). “Tradition” should be understood broadly: it includes theoretical (rhetoric, poetics, literary-aesthetical works) as well as practical (literary, cultural-historical) sources. For no author creates *ex nihilo*: he innovates through conscious variation on tradition. This legitimates the so-called *Quellenforschung* as an indispensable moment in the interpretation of any literary composition. But then, of course, the myopia of nineteenth-century (especially) German scholarship should be corrected. For it often-times simply neglected the intention of the author (*voluntas auctoris*), who manipulates his sources in order to create a structure that brings out his message. Moreover, there was little attention to non-literary sources that equally inform the composition.

Dealing with composition of Plutarch’s *Lives* will thus involve questions about the general architectonic design of the *Lives*, their structure and building blocks, identification of (literary and non-literary) sources, techniques of manipulation of those sources, and, last but not least, the intention of the author. Many of these aspects of composition are treated extensively in this volume, and will be dealt with only summarily here.

2. General Design and Architecture: Unity, Contrast, Comparison

On the threshold of the cultural movement of the Second Sophistic, Plutarch conceived of a daring enterprise. He would build a literary monument celebrating the ethical excellence Greek and Roman history had been capable of over the ages. He would found a kind of “City of Virtue,” long before Augustine would write his *City of God*. But whilst Augustine would define his City of God in opposition to the City of Men, and particularly to Rome, no such fierce antagonism would color the *Parallel Lives*. To be sure, Plutarch’s as well as Augustine’s work was the fruit of a crisis: the dominance of Rome over Greece on the one hand, and the sack of Rome by the Visigoths on the other. Such far-reaching, if not dramatic events challenged contemporary intellectuals: they had to come to terms with the new situation, the Greeks with the dominance of Rome, the Christians with the threat of its downfall. But, unlike in Augustine’s *City of God*, in Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* no one simply “wins”: Rome and Greece are not fighting a battle over virtue, ending in defeat or victory, but are competing in a noble contest. They are fellow-athletes, and there is no deciding photo finish (unless one regards the formal Comparisons (*Synkriseis*) as such; but see below).

Now what is said so far may seem plausible, but it is actually still a battleground for scholars. Jones ((1971) 106–107) argues that in Plutarch’s day there is no gap between Greeks and Romans, and consequently no reason to read the *Lives* as a diplomatic attempt to reconcile the “defeated Greece” with its “ferocious victor.” One does indeed well to take into account that Plutarch’s inclusion in the Roman network of aristocrats would temper any feelings of harsh opposition. On the other hand, he was well aware of the Roman “booth” (*Precepts of Statecraft* 813E) controlling Greece, and this may have fostered feelings of Greek pride: Duff ((1999) 291) wonders if the *Lives* are an act “of resistance, an appropriation of Roman history into a Greek framework.” Of such an “*interpretatio graeca*” Plutarch offers a specimen in his essay *On Isis and Osiris*, where he explains Egyptian mythology and rituals in terms of Greek philosophy. And in the *Life of*

Numa (1.2–4) Plutarch, against his better knowledge, refuses to simply dismiss, on chronological grounds, the possibility – or is it wishful thinking? – that Numa was instructed by Pythagoras; instead, he prefers to muse on the possibility that in the person of Numa, a founding father of Rome, Roman culture was actually Greek. It is tempting to agree with Desideri ((1992) 4481–4486), who studied the formation of pairs in Plutarch's *Lives*, and particularly also the ideological, “nationalistic” portent of that pairing. Portraying one of the founding fathers of Rome as a pupil of a Greek philosopher boils down to robbing Rome of its own cultural identity (“ai Romani veniva sottratta la propria identità culturale”).

Yet it is not Plutarch's ultimate purpose to take a stance in the debate over Greek versus Roman identity and culture (on which see Pelling (1989)). Interest in those matters may well be related to, but is at the same time subordinated to, the ethical education of the reader. “We should remember that he does not explore their culture as an end in itself. The *Parallel Lives* were composed ‘for the improvement of character’ (*pros epanorthosin êthous*: *Aem.* 1.3)” (Swain (1990) 145). The *Parallel Lives* are a pedagogical, not a cultural-historical project. They confront the reader with actualizations of virtuous conduct in order to stimulate him to make up his own mind. They provide him with the informed capacity of making moral decisions. This is made perfectly clear in the proem of the *Life of Pericles*: “For the good creates a stir of activity toward itself, and it automatically implants an impulse to action; it does not form the character of the one who views it through imitation, but through the investigation of the realization it provides him with moral choice” (2.4) (discussion of this text in Van der Stockt (1992) 32–37; Duff (1999) 34–39). The implication is that the reader in the end should indeed make his own “adult” choices (Roskam 2004), and that the moralism of the *Lives* is not prescriptive/protreptic, but descriptive (Pelling (1988) 15–16; Duff (1999) 68–69). At the same time, this is the deeper meaning of the method of juxtaposing: it is an invitation to come to a decision by comparing (*synkrisis*).

The juxtaposition of Greek and Roman actualizations of virtuous conduct took on the form of parallel biographies, and each pair makes out a book. Indeed, apart from four *Lives* (*Aratus*, *Artaxerxes*, *Galba*, *Otho*) that stand on their own, we have twenty-two pairs. Now even if there were literary antecedents that may have inspired Plutarch (Duff (1999) 289–291), in opting for this kind of *synkrisis*, Plutarch had to “invent” his subject-matter, at least at the very basic level: which heroes would be paired? It is easy to understand that in certain cases personal predilection and local patriotism (as in the lost *Life of Epaminondas*, a fellow Boeotian of Plutarch, or the *Life of Lucullus*, the “liberator” of Greece) played a role. But the framework of the *Parallel Lives* did not leave much room for passing fancies, and Plutarch must sometimes have had a hard time when looking for suitable subjects. In a detailed study Geiger (1981) argues that, despite our “inability to reconstruct the author's mental processes” (88), we can safely assume that there has been an evolution in Plutarch's plan. “In conformity with the taste of his times, most of his Greek heroes” were chosen “from the well-known areas of classical history” (90), and more specifically from Athenian history (see also Lamberton (2001) 66–68), whilst the choice of heroes from the Hellenistic age seems largely conditioned by the available sources. These Hellenistic *Lives* were “added to the series when the success of the work and his personal satisfaction made such an extension desirable” (94). For the choice of Roman heroes, especially Cornelius Nepos' *De viris illustribus* would have been Plutarch's

guide. Beck (2002), on the other hand, studying the “internal synkriseis” (Pelling (1979) 282–285, speaks of “cross-fertilizations”) between the *Life of Fabius Maximus* and the *Life of Marcellus*, emphasizes the premeditated unity of those lives, together with the (lost) *Lives of Epaminondas–Scipio*.

The synkritical presentation of the lives ends in a formal *synkrisis*. At least, this is the case in eighteen of the twenty-two surviving pairs, and we can only guess at what could be the reason for the absence of a formal *synkrisis* in *Themistocles–Camillus*, *Alexander–Caesar*, *Phocion and Cato the Younger*, and *Pyrrhus and Gaius Marius*. But the preserved ones are problematic enough: they sometimes flatly disappoint because of the irrelevance of the criteria applied in the comparison, and sometimes they even seem to contradict the tendency of the foregoing narrative. The contribution of Larmour to this volume explores these problems and suggested solutions.

Proems were to be the Propylaea to the “City of Virtue.” Proems should explain why and how the biographies were written. As such they threaten to become arid expositions of methodology and solitary musing on the relevance of the subject. Nothing of the sort in Plutarch! In a foundational article Stadter (1988), comparing Plutarch’s proems to those of other biographers and historians, shows how Plutarch does indeed meet the reasonable expectations, but then in an incomparably lively way. Ingenious comparisons, spirited anecdotes, pointed sayings all contribute to make the reader attentive, benevolent, and eager to learn. This rhetorical color goes hand in hand with philosophical inspiration and critical reflection on the optimal use of sources in order to bring the most authentic portrait of the hero involved. This is Plutarch at his best, and ... he resembles the Plutarch of the *Moralia* (see also below). More detail about the proems is to be found in the contribution of Duff to this volume.

3. The Biographies: Building Blocks and Structure

We now turn to the biographical narratives themselves. The genre of biography was not “a rigidly defined genre,” nor was there any “single historiographical genre with acknowledged conventions” (Pelling (2003) 241). Especially its distinction from historiography was not clear-cut. In the proem to the *Life of Alexander* (1.1–2) Plutarch does indeed make a distinction, but it is made *ad hoc*, and as a disclaimer: “As we begin in this book to write the life of Alexander ... we shall, because of the number of deeds which are in prospect, make no other preface than to beg our readers not to complain, if we do not report all of their famous deeds and do not even report exhaustively on any of them, but do the majority in summary. For it is not so much histories that we are writing but lives, and there is not always in the most outstanding deeds a revelation of virtue or vice, but often a little matter like a saying or a joke hints at character more than battles where thousands die, huge troop developments, or the sieges of cities” (translation Duff (1999) 15). Even if, as Duff stresses, this is not a universally valid definition of biography, it makes clear that Plutarch selects material in order to bring out as plainly as possible the character of his hero, his virtue or vice, for contemplation of that character will eventually educate the reader (*Life of Pericles*, cf. above). In the proem to the *Life of Nicias* (1.1–5) Plutarch repeats what is his purpose in writing *Lives*: his summary of the events narrated by Thucydides and Philistus as well as the new material he will bring in serve the purpose

of “the understanding of character and manner” of his hero. The solemn statements should, for that matter, not blind us to the reality that some of Plutarch’s *Lives* show more historiographical interest than ethical-pedagogical concern with character (Pelling (1980) 136–137, on the *Life of Caesar*).

Now if purpose dictates selection, so does the genre of biography itself. We expect a biography to tell the story of a life, from birth to death, and to narrate the events in the “natural” chronological order. Yet, as Momigliano ((1993) 11) observed, it is just impossible to relate each and every second of a person’s life: a biography will inevitably make a selection and highlight pivotal moments of a life. It is nonetheless a reasonable expectation to find information about (a) his origin, birth, youth, formation (on which see the contribution of Soares to this volume), and something about his *entrée* in public life; (b) his achievements; and (c) his death (on which see the contribution of Cooper to this volume). In fact, there is a great variation in the presentation of this material throughout the *Lives*. Sometimes, for that matter, the presentation is subtly misleading, as in the case of Pericles. Plutarch (*Life of Pericles* 4) suggests that Pericles’ teachers were Damon, Pythoclides, and Anaxagoras, whereas they can only have had some influence on the mature Pericles (Stadter (1989) 68). Nothing is found about Numa’s youth, and this omission is certainly due to a lack of sources, for Plutarch had a keen interest in youth and education. But a lack of sources does not always prevent Plutarch from reconstructing the youth of a hero. In the case of Romulus, Aemilius and Cyrus, and others, Pelling ((1990a) 226) points to the technique of “retrojecting aspects of the man’s later career.”

As can be expected in such political biographies, Plutarch is much interested in the way his heroes enter public life. In his *Precepts of Statecraft* (804C–806F), he sketches two possible roads to politics: the one quick and illustrious, but dangerous, the other slow, but safer. Both roads have advantages and disadvantages, and the *Lives* provide examples of both; the sudden and glorious *entrée* was the way, for example, Theseus, Caesar, and Flamininus chose to enter public life, whilst, for example, Aristides, Phocion, and Lucullus opted for the slow road. The political reality as it is depicted in the *Lives*, however, is more nuanced than the theoretical framework developed in the *Precepts* (Roskam (2008)).

Generally speaking, and taking into account that chronology is not Plutarch’s priority (Stadter (1989) xlviii–li), the bulk of the achievements that bring out the hero’s character are presented in chronological order. Rhetorical theory would warn that such “natural order,” although it serves the purpose of clarity, threatens to become tedious. Plutarch counters this threat only rarely by a technique, and many times by a certain habit. The technique is that of flashback, or as the case may be flash-forward, and the habit is that of digressions. An example of a flashback is in the *Life of Timoleon*, where after the story of Timoleon’s election as the commander of the expedition to Sicily (3.2–3), Plutarch reports about his youth, bravery, involvement in the murder of his brother, and his subsequent political inactivity (3.4–5.4); only in 7.3 does he continue the story. The flashback ends with the ominous words of Teleclides: “If you contend successfully, we shall think of you as a tyrannicide; but if poorly, as a fratricide.” Who wouldn’t want to know the outcome? The flashback indeed heightens tension, arousing expectations concerning the future. A flash-forward, on the other hand, makes one curious not so much about *what* will happen as about *how* things will come to pass. The narrator of the story in the *Life of Timoleon* knows about the future treachery of Nicetas, the ruler of

Leontini, and makes no secret of that future treachery to his reader (2.3–4); but he teasingly makes him curious for more detail: “this, then, was fully proved a little later.” Only in 7.3–7 of Plutarch’s text is more detail provided. The *Life of Caesar* 4.4 as well contains such an ominous flash-forward. Very early in the *Life* (4) the popularity of Caesar makes the narrator hint at future developments, namely “a complete revolution of the state.” Cicero would have been the first to detect what Caesar’s actual project was. But then the narrator interrupts himself: “This, then, belongs to a later period.”

Digressions are in the habit of Plutarch, and so much so that they are not always appreciated by modern readers. Admittedly, they may testify to a certain loquacity (as the mark of a genuine storyteller?). But they differ widely in size and nature, and they serve different purposes. A few examples will illustrate their rich variety. In the *Life of Pericles* (4.1) Plutarch mentions Damon as Pericles’ teacher in music and adds that, “so they say, his name should be pronounced with the first syllable short.” Is this a superfluous ostentatious display of linguistic erudition? If Plutarch was a clever writer, he knew his reader would not be irritated by this kind of additional information, and that affording it would add to his fame as a well-informed scholar. Later on (4.4) an excursion follows upon the mention of Anaxagoras. It explains Anaxagoras’ nickname, “*Nous*” (Mind), and contains a summary of Anaxagoras’ cosmology, including a reference to the “*homoiomereiai*.” If you don’t know what this means exactly, neither did Plutarch’s average reader, nor will he have grasped instantly why this excursion was included. But apart from showing Plutarch’s expertise in matters of the history of philosophy, it also prepares the reader for the exposé of the influence of Anaxagoras’ “lofty” natural philosophy on Pericles’ “lofty” character. Finally, consider the very long digression about the Sacred Band of Thebes in the *Life of Pelopidas* (18.1–19.2); it serves to explain how it could come about that the Thebans defeated the Spartans at Tegyra. But it is nevertheless very long, and one wonders if it was really necessary to heap up references (to Homer, Aristotle, Plato), dicta (Pammenes, Philip), and anecdotes (the fallen soldier, Heracles and Iolaüs). Yet this is not just uncontrolled babbling. Consider the following diagram listing a series of parallels (with translations from the Loeb Classical Library):

Table Talks 1.2

A: 618D: “Pammenes the Theban was not unfair in accusing Homer of being a man without skill in the ways of love because he arrayed clans with clans and joined brotherhoods with brotherhoods (*Il.* 2.363), when he ought to have bridged lover with beloved in order that throughout its whole the army might possess bond and be animated by one spirit.”

Dialogue on Love 17

[D: 3, 750B: For it’s not just five days’ journey, like Laius, that you are away from home”]

Life of Pelopidas 18

A: “And a pleasantry of Pammenes is cited, in which he said that Homer’s Nestor was no tactician when he urged the Greeks to form in companies by clans and tribes ‘that clan might give assistance unto clan, and tribes to tribes’ (*Il.* 2.363).”

A: 761B: “Pammenes, a man versed in love, changed the order of battle-line for the hoplites, censuring Homer as knowing nothing about love, because he arranged the companies of the Achaeans by tribes and clans (*Il.* 2.363) and did not station lover beside beloved, in order to bring it about that ‘shield supported shield and helmet helmet’ (*Il.* 13.131), ...”

B: 761C: “When another man had fallen in battle on his face and an enemy was about to kill him, he begged the latter to wait for a moment in order that his beloved might not see him wounded from behind”

C: 761D: “As for Heracles, it would be difficult to list all his loves, they are so numerous. For example, believing Iolaüs to have been loved by him, to this very day lovers worship and honour Iolaüs, exchanging vows and pledges with their beloved at his tomb.”

B: “... as was true of him who, when his enemy was about to slay him where he lay, earnestly besought him to run his sword through his breast, ‘in order,’ as he said, ‘that my beloved may not have the blush at sight of my body with a wound in the back.’”

C: “It is related, too, that Iolaüs, who shared the labours of Heracles and fought by his side, was beloved of him. And Aristotle says that even down to his day the tomb of Iolaüs was a place where lovers and beloved plighted mutual faith.”

– Reference to Plato: Plato calls the lover a friend “inspired of God” (*Symposium* 179a)
– Dictum of Philip at Chaeronea

[**D:** 19.1: “Speaking generally, however, it was not the passion of Laius that, as the poets say, first made this form of love customary among the Thebans.”]

There seems to have been a rather structured hypotext underlying both the passage in the *Dialogue on Love* and the one in the *Life of Pelopidas*. But the text of the *Life* offers more material than the one in the *Dialogue*, and there are small differences (see the underlined text). Westlake ((1939) 13) aptly comments: “The excursus on the Sacred Band is considered to derive from sources other than that used for the battle of Tegyra. It is doubtless drawn ... from works *peri erotos* [*On Love*], of which Plutarch shows

considerable knowledge in the *Moralia*.” An excursus, then, on the basis of material that had its proper place in the *Moralia*. But it also works the other way around. Consider the following parallel passages (with translations from the Loeb Classical Library):

<i>Life of Lycurgus</i> 28.8	And in other ways also they were harsh and cruel to the Helots. For instance, they would force them to drink too much strong wine, and then introduce them into their public messes, to show the young men what a thing drunkenness was. They also ordered them to sing songs and dance dances that were low and ridiculous, but to let the nobler kind alone.
<i>Life of Demetrius</i> 1.4	Accordingly, the ancient Spartans would put compulsion upon their helots at the festivals to drink much unmixed wine, and would then bring them into the public messes, in order to show their young men what it was to be drunk.
<i>Sayings of Spartans</i> 239B	They used to make the Helots drunk and exhibit them to the young as a deterrent from excessive drinking.
<i>On the Control of Anger</i> 455E	I began to observe the passion in others, just as the Spartans used to observe in the Helots what a thing drunkenness is.

“The story has, of course, its proper place in the *Life of Lycurgus*, where it is part of the discussion on the Lycurgan constitution; the “harsh and cruel treatment” is condemned through the very terms in which it is described. In *Demetrius* 1.4 the critique is even more outspoken: “And though I do not think that the perverting of some to secure the setting right of others, is very humane, or a good civil policy ...”! But the insertion of material from the *Lives* makes adaptations of the text to the new context of *On the Control of Anger* necessary; in the case at hand, the adaptations are omissions of unsuitable detail: the young as spectators, the compulsion that forced the helots to drink excessively (Van der Stockt (2008) 287). In the next section of this chapter we will have a closer look at Plutarch’s manipulation of his sources.

Thus the exposition of the hero’s origin, youth, education, achievements, and death is interrupted by digressions, flashbacks, and flash-forwards. But that is only the skeleton of the structure. Its soul (“die gestaltende Kraft und ihre das Ganze durchwaltende Gestik”: Bantel (1962) 43) animates the story and creates a lively portrait of the hero and his virtue (or vice). It is this Plutarchan drive that constructs *Lives* full of drama, unexpected reversals of fortune, long prepared climaxes, and sometimes tragic downfalls.

4. Manipulating Sources

It is generally acknowledged that Plutarch was most widely read in Greek (and to a lesser degree in Roman) literature, and that he is exceptionally generous with quotations and references. Even if in some cases or concerning some aspects of the life of his hero adequate sources were not readily available, in general (and apart from the *Lives* that are situated in the mythical era such as that of Theseus, or of Romulus) the problem was more to select and to assess the nature and value of the available sources than to find any, and then to put them to adequate use. “Adequate” here means “serving Plutarch’s purpose.”

In order to assess the reliability of his source(s), Plutarch did not apply the rigorous historical method as has been developed only in modern times. But that does not mean he was devoid of a sincere interest in historical investigation. His rhetorical as well as his philosophical background, tinged as it was by New Academic tendencies (Opsomer (1998) 127–193), made him carefully reflect on what was probable (*eikos*) (Wardman (1974) 161–168) and Nikolaidis ((1997) 341) showed that, when Plutarch's ethical purpose is always taken into account, he proves "an honest and conscientious student of history," and that his criteria for the evaluation of his authorities are "more or less sound and sensible" (but see Pelling (1980) 139).

But that was only the beginning of the great enterprise. For Plutarch did not simply make excerpts from his sources and patch those bits and pieces together. That indeed would have made him the poor writer nineteenth-century *Quellenforschung* thought he was. To be sure, Plutarch, like many ancient authors (Dorandi (2000) 27–50; Stadter (1989) xlv–xlvi), took notes (*hypomnemata*) when reading: you never know when those would come in handy! Now parallel to the famous statement "I am writing lives, not history" in the proem to the *Life of Alexander*, there is an equally famous line in Plutarch's essay *On Tranquillity of Mind*: "*anelexamên peri euthymias ek ton hypomnematôn hon emautoi pepoiêmenos etugchannon*" (464F: "From the notes I took on my own behalf, I picked up and gathered what is relevant for the theme of tranquility of mind"). Those notes, however, as personal meditations, were Plutarch's own construction and, so to speak, the deposit of his own train of thought. We are entitled, then, to look for traces of those *hypomnemata* in the essay. "Plutarch, especially when one takes into account the extent of his oeuvre and the wide range of subjects to be treated, must have been tempted, sometimes even forced, to repeat himself, i.e. to use the same *hypomnema(ta)* more than once. If then we find in *De tranq. anim.* a passage "repeated" elsewhere in Plutarch, which also fulfills some minimal conditions (its theme and phrasing should be recognizably identical in the two contexts), we can safely regard it as (part of) a Plutarchan *hypomnema*, i.e. a sample of "Plutarch as a source for Plutarch" (Van der Stockt (1999) 577). In short, "clusters of parallels" are the tangible elements of an underlying *hypomnema*, and thorough philological analysis (on the level of invention, disposition, and elocution) of them gives us a clear view of Plutarch's compositional method, that is, of the way he adapts his *hypomnema* to different contexts. An example of such a (part of) an *hypomnema* is given in this diagram:

How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend 15–16
theme: silent flattery, especially of the rich

A *zografia* (but *filautia* in 1)

B1 (*gar*) two illustrations:

Apelles/Megabyzus
Solon

C Plutarch's **paraphrase** of the
Stoic dictum

On Tranquillity of Mind 12

theme: realistic adjustment of impulses
to capacities

A' *filautia*

C Plutarch's **paraphrase** of the
Stoic dictum

B1, 2 (no particle): four illustrations:

Dionysius

Alexander/Crison

Achilles

Megabyzus/Apelles

D (*eita*) **criticism** of Stoic dictum

E Stoic **dictum**

B2 three illustrations:

Crison/Alexander

Carneades

Bion

D (*all'*) **criticism** of Stoic dictum

E Stoic **dictum**

Going by Plutarch's statement that he used several *hypomnemata* in the process of writing *On Tranquility of Mind*, we should find several "clusters of parallels" in that essay linking it to other essays. And indeed, there are five such clusters (Van der Stockt (2004)).

"Clusters of parallels," then, are a profitable hermeneutic tool, and it would be exciting if they could teach us something about Plutarch's *modus operandi* in the *Lives* as well. But here an important restriction must be made. On the one hand, *hypomnemata* linking a *Life* to an essay are extremely rare. An example establishing a link between the *Dialogue on Love* and the *Life of Pelopidas* is given above: it is no coincidence that the parallels involved occur in a digression in the *Life*. For *hypomnemata* in the *Essays* are personal meditations, a kind of meditative freewheeling on the part of Plutarch. Yet the freedom to develop personal ideas was, apart from the digressions, more limited in the *Lives*: the narrative itself dictated the bulk of the argument. On the other hand, there are quite a few passages linking one *Life* to another, because they treat the same historical period. In those cases it is only natural that clusters of tangible parallels (especially of names and places of specific events) will appear in two or more *Lives*. An example of such a "cluster" is the *Life of Cicero* 42.3–5 ≈ *Life of Caesar* 67. 8–68 ≈ *Life of Brutus* 19–21.1 ≈ *Life of Antony* 14.1–10. Such a cluster may very well be the deposit of a *hypomnema* – "almost a draft history, in fact, though one peculiarly rich in biographical diversions" (Pelling (1988) 33, 151). Close reading of the passages involved reveals Plutarch's adroitness in applying different techniques, such as reshaping episodes, moving stories to a different context, simplifying stories, ignoring details, adding details, and so on. These manipulations of the material serve the purpose of creating the image of the hero Plutarch had in mind in each particular *Life*.

Leaving the question of *hypomnemata* aside, one can get a pretty good idea of Plutarch's compositional techniques by comparing him with his sources, if they are still available. In a seminal article Russell (1963), assuming that Dionysius' *Roman Antiquities* 5–8 is Plutarch's main source for his *Life of Coriolanus*, is able to discern three techniques: expansions, abridgments, and transpositions; he adds reinterpretation as yet another reason for divergence from Dionysius. In this vein, Pelling ((1979), (1980)) studied eight *Lives* belonging to the final years of the Roman Republic, and he considerably fine-tunes the techniques just mentioned.

Did all this twisting of the material harm the reliability of Plutarch's narrative? Did he in the end betray the truth? Not what he honestly believed to be the truth about his hero's character. And Plutarch was at least right when he believed that his portraits would appeal to the imagination of his readers. Whether the reader would automatically experience an impulse to imitate the personified virtues is another matter. But imaginative empathy with the hero, inasmuch as that implies a cognitive moment, is at least a precondition for making ethical choices hinted at in the proem to the *Lives of Alexander–Caesar*.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

An excellent handbook with a detailed exposition of the methodology of classical hermeneutics is Babilas (1961). Before attempting to discuss Plutarch's *Lives*, reading Duff (1999) is an absolute prerequisite: he discusses many of the issues of this chapter with exemplary hermeneutic tact. There are several inspiring studies of individual *Lives*: Hamilton (1969) on the Alexander, Pelling (1988) on the Antony, Stadter (1989) on the Pericles, Tröster (2008) on the Lucullus, Verdegem (2010) on the Alcibiades, to name only a few. Extensive bibliographies on the Greek *Lives* are to be found in Podlecki (1992), on the Roman *Lives* in Titchener (1992).

CHAPTER 23

The Prologues

Timothy E. Duff

1. Prologues, Books, and Lives

In discussing the prologues, it is important to distinguish between books and Lives. The *Parallel Lives* were published not as individual Lives, nor merely as pairs of Lives, but in books,¹ of which twenty-two survive.² At the heart of each book, and taking up most space, are, of course, the two Lives. But most books contain either one or two further sections. All but four end with a comparative epilogue (*synkrisis*),³ where the two men whose Lives have just been narrated are weighed up against each other. In addition, thirteen books (that is, just over half the extant corpus) begin with a prologue, which provides an introduction to both Lives.⁴ These are *Theseus–Romulus*, *Cimon–Lucullus*, *Pericles–Fabius*, *Nicias–Crassus*, *Demosthenes–Cicero*, *Phocion–Cato Minor*, *Dion–Brutus*, *Aemilius–Timoleon*, *Sertorius–Eumenes*, *Pelopidas–Marcellus*, *Alexander–Caesar*, *Demetrius–Antony*, and *Agis/Cleomenes–Gracchi*. It is possible that the *Themistocles–Camillus*, whose opening is corrupt, may also have had a prologue which has been lost.⁵ Conversely nine books (or eight if we discount the *Them.–Cam.*) lack a prologue and begin directly with the first Life.⁶

Prologues, then, operate at the level of the book: that is, they introduce both Lives of a pair, and, like the *synkriseis*, stand outside of both. It is true that in the manuscripts the prologues appear as part of the first Life, just as the *synkriseis* are presented as part of the second. But in fact the prologues are as distinct from the first Life as the *synkrisis* is from the second.⁷ Indeed, the prologues are in some ways the mirror image of the *synkriseis*; both weld together the two Lives which make up the bulk of the book, but whereas *synkriseis* stress differences between the two men whose lives are told, most prologues bring out, though in much shorter space, the similarities. Accordingly, editors ought to use the same conventions to distinguish prologues from the first Life as they do to distinguish *synkriseis* from second Lives.

2. The Function and Structure of Prologues

The prologues have several functions. First and foremost they introduce and name the subjects of both Lives of a pair, though they may concentrate more on one than the other. Most also give some brief rationale for why the Lives of the two subjects have been brought together in a single book: this usually consists of a brief enumeration of similarities of career or characteristics. Second, prologues set the reader's generic expectations.⁸ Some comment explicitly on the genre or purpose of the Lives, or on Plutarch's methodology; such comments relate primarily to the particular Lives which these prologues introduce, but tend also to have a broader reference and to be relevant to the *Parallel Lives* as a whole.⁹ This may include discussion of sources and/or attempts to distinguish Plutarch's approach from that of other writers. Prologues may also contain discussion of the nature of virtue and how to attain it; this is related to genre, in that the purpose of the Lives is sometimes said to be the revelation of the character of their subjects or the moral improvement of the reader.¹⁰ Third, prologues establish Plutarch's own persona and construct his readers as people who share his values. Finally, prologues draw the reader's attention, and arouse interest.

One might have expected that the first two elements here – naming of the subjects and the explanation for the pairing – would form the opening lines of the prologues. In fact, the opposite tends to be the case. Most prologues contain two distinct sections. The first section contains generalized reflections either on the purpose of history or of the Lives specifically, or on some moral issue; sometimes the two sorts (moral reflections and reflections on the purpose of the *Lives*) are combined. Although in a few prologues the subject of one Life is named here in the course of these reflections, in most the two subjects are normally neither named nor alluded to in this first section.¹¹ This has the effect of creating suspense, or, to use ancient terminology, “arousing interest in the reader.”¹² Both *chreiai* (that is, anecdotes tied to a named individual and including words attributed to him) and literary allusions are common in this section, especially in the opening lines. Addresses to Sosius Senecio, the dedicatee of the *Parallel Lives*, occur in the opening sentence of three prologues, but never elsewhere in the prologues.¹³ Towards the end of the first section there is a tendency for generalized reflections to become more specific: for example, reflections on virtue become reflections on the virtues of the great men in history (e.g. *Per.* 2.3–4); reflections on the problems posed by small-town life become reflections on Plutarch's own situation in Chaeronea (*Dem.* 2.2–3); reflections on the importance of negative examples become reflections on the reasonableness of including such examples in the *Lives* (*Demetr.* 1.5–6).

It is only in the second, generally much shorter, section of the prologue that the two subjects are introduced. This section, which is often introduced by a resumptive “So,” “This,” or “These things” (*oun, touto, tauta*),¹⁴ usually begins with an explicit naming of the two subjects, and then gives a rationale for their comparison, pointing out similarities between them. In this second section, Plutarch frequently refers subjectively to the writing process and occasionally here (and only here) uses the term “book” – this is, after all, the introduction to the book as a whole.¹⁵ The presence of the narrator is generally felt more strongly in the second section, though there is a tendency to move toward more impersonal expressions as we approach the end.

3. The Structure of the Prologues: Examples

This two-part structure provides a sense of movement, as we progress from anecdotes and sayings, through generalized reflections, to the specifics of the two Lives that will follow. It is found, with some variation, in all but two of the surviving thirteen prologues (the exceptions are the *Alexander–Caesar* and *Nicias–Crassus*).¹⁶ It is very clear, for example, in the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue, which begins [section 1] not with mention of the subjects of the two Lives but with an anecdote about the emperor Augustus. The prologue continues with a contrast between sense perception and reason: the senses must receive every stimulus that impinges on them, whereas the mind may be directed toward objects that will benefit us – such as virtuous deeds. These virtuous deeds, Plutarch continues, inspire their “viewers” not just to admire them, as works of art inspire their viewers, but to imitate them; consideration of the virtuous deeds of others thus brings benefit, not just pleasure or admiration (*Per.* 1.1–2.4). It has by now already become clear that, in talking of deeds (*praxeis*), Plutarch expects his readers to have in mind the deeds of statesmen, recorded in history;¹⁷ and when he talks of “the good” implanting in spectators an “active impulse” he is making a claim for the practical, educative function of his own work of history, the *Lives*. But it is only at this point [i.e. the beginning of the second section] that Plutarch mentions for the first time the subjects of the two Lives which this prologue introduces and the reasons for their pairing: “So it seemed right for us too (*Edoxen oun kai hēmin...*) [i.e. because history in general is beneficial] to persevere in our writing of the Lives, and we have composed this book, tenth in the series, which contains the Life of Pericles and that of Fabius Maximus, who fought it out with Hannibal: men who were alike in their virtues, especially in their calmness and justice and their ability to endure the follies of their peoples and of their colleagues in office, and so proved most beneficial to their countries” (*Per.* 2.5). The reader is thus led from a striking, opening anecdote, through philosophical reflection, to reflection on the value and purpose of the *Lives* in general, to (finally) the subjects of these Lives; and the list of similarities between them not only provides the reader with an explanation for the pairing but also highlights the key moral concerns of the book.¹⁸

The prologue to the *Demetrius–Antony*, though probably written much later, shares the concerns and imagery of that to the *Pericles–Fabius*, as it does its structure. Reflections on sense perception, reason, and the arts once again begin the prologue, though this time the point is the similarity rather than the difference between our practice of the arts and our reasoning: in both cases we can learn from bad examples. There then follows a discussion of the benefits to be had from studying negative examples, structured around a contrast between “the Spartans of old” (*hoi men oun Spartiatai*) and “us” (*hēmeis de*), before Plutarch turns to his own work, the *Lives*, which he claims can also make use of bad examples (1.5–6). Thus, whereas the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue suggested the benefit of studying examples of good conduct, this prologue extends this benefit to bad conduct too. Finally [section 2] Plutarch introduces the subjects of the book by name: “This book will contain (*Periexei dē touto to biblion*) the life of Demetrius the Besieger and that of Antony the Imperator, men who most bore witness to Plato’s assertion that great natures produce great vices as well as great virtues” (*Demetr.* 1.7). The prologue closes, like that to the *Pericles–Fabius*, with a brief statement of the similarities of the two subjects (1.8).¹⁹

Both these prologues, then, begin with a long set of reflections and anecdotes, the relevance of which to the Lives that they introduce is revealed only gradually. The *Pelopidas–Marcellus* likewise begins [section 1] with an extremely long set of reflections, this time not on the benefits to be had from history but on the rashness of generals, with multiple anecdotes and literary quotations (*Pel.* 1.1–2.8). The relevance of this abstract discussion is only made clear when finally [section 2] Pelopidas and Marcellus are introduced by name, in a sentence which also contains the first occurrence of a personal pronoun referring to the narrator in this prologue and the first reference to the writing process: “These things occurred to me to say by way of preface (*proanaphōnēsai*) as I write the life of Pelopidas and that of Marcellus, great men who fell unexpectedly” (2.9).²⁰ The summary of their similarities that follows provides both a rationale for the pairing and an explanation of the relevance to these particular Lives of the opening disquisition on the importance of generals not throwing away their lives in battle: “For being most formidable in hand-to-hand fighting, and having both adorned their countries with illustrious terms of office as general ... they were careless of their own persons, letting go their own lives with no thought, at a time when it was most important that such men should survive and command” (2.10–11). The prologue concludes, “So taking the lead from these similarities, we have written their Lives in parallel” (*Pel.* 2.12).²¹ Once again, then, the statement of similarities provides not merely a justification for putting the two men together, but also signals clearly a key locus of moral evaluation.²²

Significantly, the very first words of the *Pelopidas–Marcellus* prologue are a name (“Cato the Elder ...”) – but not the name of one of the subjects of the book. This is a teasing way to begin a book, keeping the reader guessing as to who the real subjects are, and so creating suspense.²³ This technique of misdirection is a feature of several other prologues, where, as here, the first words contain a name, but not the name of one of the subjects of the book: *Cimon–Lucullus* (“Peripoltas the seer ...”), *Phocion–Cato* (“Demades the orator ...”), *Pericles–Fabius* (“Upon seeing some rich foreigners in Rome ... Caesar ...”). But this is really an extension of the technique that applies in most prologues, where the names of the subjects are delayed until after a section of reflections, complete with anecdotes and quotations.

Take the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue. Its first words are a learned quotation from an encomium of Alcibiades (“Whoever wrote Alcibiades’ encomium ...”). The reader may at this point be wondering whether this is the start of a life of Alcibiades – a misapprehension that is not dispelled until 3.1. The first chapter is taken up with reflections on the disadvantages of living in a small town and on how this does not, however, necessarily preclude great achievement (*Dem.* 1). It is only in the second chapter that the relevance of this abstract discussion becomes clear, as the prologue moves to Plutarch’s own situation, attempting to write a work of history but deprived of access to a great library and not having learnt Latin when young (*Dem.* 2). Finally [section 2], Plutarch names Demosthenes and Cicero, and lays out his methodology: “Therefore (*dio*) [i.e. because my Latin is not good enough to allow a proper evaluation of Latin style], in writing in this book, the fifth of the *Parallel Lives*, about Demosthenes and Cicero, we shall examine in relation to each other their natures and dispositions on the basis of their actions and political careers [i.e. and not their writings]. But we will pass by the opportunity (*easomen*) to compare their speeches and to demonstrate who was the more pleasant or effective speaker” (*Dem.* 3.1). Plutarch then names an earlier writer, Caecilius (of Kale Acte),

who tried and failed to do such a literary comparison, before concluding that it is no easy thing to “Know Oneself” as the Delphic oracle recommended. The rest of the prologue sets out the similarities between the two men (*Dem.* 3.3–5).²⁴ The structure is similar to that of the other prologues we have examined: generalized reflections, complete with anecdotes and allusions, in the first half of the prologue, gradually becoming more specifically focused on Plutarch himself and his writing, leading up to the naming of the subjects and a summary of their points of similarity. What is different here is that a methodological claim runs through and informs both parts.

In the *Dion–Brutus* the opening reflections are truncated, and the second section itself contains a long digression. The prologue begins, as the *Demosthenes–Cicero* does, with a direct address to Sosius Senecio and a quotation (“Just as Simonides says, O Sosius Senecio, that ...”). The quotation of Simonides is employed here to provide a mythological parallel for the notion of equality. This is followed by the introduction of Dion and Brutus by name [section 2], and an explanation for the relevance of the notion of equality: “So it is likely in the same way that neither the Romans nor the Greeks will quarrel with the Academy, since they come off equally from this ‘work’ (*ek tēs grafēs tantēs*) [i.e. book] which contains the Life of Dion and of Brutus – the former of whom was a pupil of Plato himself and the latter was brought up on the writings of Plato, so that they both set out from one and the same wrestling school, as it were, to engage in the greatest struggles” (*Dion* 1.1–2).²⁵ The rationale for the comparison follows, including a long discussion of whether both men’s deaths could really have been foretold to them by the *daimonion* (a word which continues the Platonic associations) through the appearance of phantoms. First person verbs, singular and plural, first occur toward the end of this discussion and run to the end of the prologue (2.5–7). Two final sentences (2.7) mark the end of the prologue: “But these things must be delayed for another work (*eis allon anakeisthō logon*). In this one, the twelfth [sc. *logōi*, i.e. book] of the *Parallel Lives*, let us bring forward on to the stage first (*proeisagagōmen*) that [i.e. the Life] of the older man.”²⁶ This sentence, which marks the transition from prologue to first Life, also contains some features which, as we have seen, commonly appear in that section of the prologue where the two subjects are first introduced, namely, first person verbs and a reference to the writing process or structure of the *Lives*.²⁷

4. Variation: Naming One Subject before the Other

The *Dion–Brutus* varies the basic pattern by truncating the first section. Several other prologues vary this structure by naming one subject before the other. In the *Theseus–Romulus* the two sections are not as clearly distinguished as in other prologues, though there is still the same movement from general reflections, becoming more specific, to the naming of the two subjects. The prologue begins with an address to Sosius Senecio, and what appear to be reflections on geography (“Just as in geographies, Sosius Senecio, historians squeeze on to the edges of their maps those places which escape their knowledge ...”) (*Thes.* 1.1). Soon, however, Plutarch makes clear the relevance of these reflections to his current project: “so for me, in my writing of the *Parallel Lives*, I have traversed that period which is accessible to probable reasoning and forms a basis for a history which clings to facts” (*Thes.* 1.2); and he declares his purpose to go back in time further

than even Lycurgus and Numa (whose Lives evidently predate the *Theseus–Romulus*). Romulus is named first, and then after staging what is presented as Plutarch's own dilemma, with an adaptation of two lines from Aeschylus ("With such a man, who will join in battle?"), the prologue concludes that with the founder of Rome should be compared the founder of Athens (1.5). Theseus is not yet named; the reference to the two *places* continues the geographical simile that began at the start of the prologue (1.1; cf. 2.2: "one founded Rome, the other united Athens"). The prologue continues with a plea to the "listeners" (*akroatōn*) for indulgence if the narrative is at times hard to credit (1.5), before naming Theseus and beginning a section that sets out the similarities of the two men: "Theseus began to seem [sc. to us], then, (*Edokei d' oun ho Thēseus*) to fit Romulus because of their many similarities" (2.1).²⁸

The prologue to the *Sertorius–Eumenes* is structured in a similar way, with the naming of one subject before the other. General reflections on coincidences begin (*Sert.* 1.1–7), to be interrupted by a first person verb ("come, let us add this one too"), and the naming of Sertorius as an example of another coincidence: the success of one-eyed generals (1.8). A discussion of Sertorius' qualities follows to show him superior in many respects to various well-known generals ("One would declare him more self-controlled as regards women than Philip, more faithful to his friends than ..."). Finally Eumenes is introduced by name as the man most comparable with Sertorius, and a brief list of their similarities follows. It is noticeable how carefully structured this prologue is. The material on coincidences leads naturally to the naming of Sertorius first, i.e. before Eumenes (*he* was the man with one eye); second, the *synkrisis* of Sertorius with other generals, a well-known rhetorical technique to emphasize someone's qualities, leads naturally to the comparison at the center of this book, that of Sertorius with Eumenes; in addition the naming of Philip and Antigonus as examples of one-eyed generals prepares for the introduction of Eumenes, who served under one and fought the other.

The prologue to the *Phocion–Cato Minor* begins with a saying of the orator Demades that whatever regrettable actions he took should be forgiven because "he was a statesman of a shipwrecked city" (i.e. because of Athens' weakness in the face of Macedonia) (*Phoc.* 1.1). In other cases, as we have seen, the subject of an opening *chreia* may have no obvious, historical connection to the subjects of either Life of the book and be used as a way of introducing a series of reflections. In this case, however, Demades was a contemporary of Phocion, and the latter is named immediately afterwards with the claim that Demades' words were not really applicable to himself but were to Phocion (1.2–3). Discussion now moves to the virtue of Phocion, which "the fortunes of Greece made dim and obscure in reputation" (1.4–6). Further generalized reflections follow, which make up the bulk of the prologue, on the dangers posed for the statesman of operating in a city that has fallen on hard times, and on the need to tread a careful course between harshness and leniency in dealing with the *dēmos* – reflections that establish what will be an important focus of the Lives that will follow (1.5–2.9). Finally [section 2], the two subjects are introduced, though this time not together: Cato is named first ("These things happened to Cato the Younger too"), and introduced as a man who struggled virtuously against opposing fortunes (3.1–5). "And with it" [i.e. with Cato's virtue], Plutarch goes on, "we compare that of Phocion, though *not* because of their general resemblances, in that they were good and statesmanlike men" (3.6).²⁹ Plutarch explains and expands on this rather surprising claim [i.e. that Phocion and Cato are not paired

because of general resemblances] in the next sentence: other men may manifest the same virtue, but they still differ; but Phocion and Cato were so similar in every way that, Plutarch concludes, “a very subtle reasoning is needed, like a tool, to isolate and discover the differences between them” (3.9). That is, Plutarch both justifies the pairing and emphasizes the subtlety of his treatment of it by claiming that Phocion and Cato were exceptionally alike. However, though made slightly more complex by having Phocion named early, the same basic structure as in other Lives of reflections, followed by introduction of the individuals and assessment of similarities, can be observed here.³⁰

Many prologues, as we have seen, begin with an anecdote or saying. In the case of the *Cimon–Lucullus* this is taken to an extreme, and the opening anecdote is almost two chapters long. A long narrative of attempted rape and murder in Plutarch’s home town begins, into which Lucullus, the subject of the second Life, is introduced as one of the actors: the Roman general, on passing through the town with his army, investigated matters and concluded that the town should not be held responsible for the murder of a Roman centurion; later his evidence was crucial when the town was arraigned before the governor of Macedonia, and the grateful citizens erected a statue in his honor (*Cim.* 1.1–2.1).³¹ It is at this point that the relationship of this opening narrative to the Lives that will follow becomes clear: “They [the people of Chaeronea] (*ekeinoi men*) [erected a statue] ... but we (*hēmeis de*), even if we are many generations distant, think that his favor reaches down even to us who are alive now. And since we believe that a portrait which exhibits character and manner is much more beautiful than one which reproduces the face and body, we will include this man’s deeds in our writing of the *Parallel Lives*, going through them truthfully” (*Cim.* 2.2). The mention of gratitude here and in the next line, and the comparison with the statue erected in Lucullus’ honor, might lead the reader to expect a purely encomiastic account. But Plutarch goes on immediately afterwards to deny this, with a deft piece of rhetoric: Lucullus famously told the truth, so he would not accept an untruthful account of his own life. The comparison of writing a Life with producing a portrait continues, as Plutarch proceeds to reflect on the conflicting demands of telling the truth and not over-emphasizing the subject’s faults; no human being, he concludes, is ever perfect (2.3–5). Only at this point is Cimon introduced: “Now it seemed to us, when we considered it, that Lucullus ought to be compared with Cimon” (*Cim.* 3.1). The final chapter of the prologue lists the similarities of the two men (*Cim.* 3.1–3). The *Cimon–Lucullus*, then, is a variation on the usual prologue structure. In particular, its first two chapters mix the anecdotal material and the reflections on history and on virtue that we find in many openings, with direct mention of Lucullus, one of the subjects.³²

5. *Alexander–Caesar and Nicias–Crassus*

Most prologues, then, follow the same basic structure, in which the two subjects are only named after a section of reflections, and in which the final element is a list of similarities between the two men. The exceptions are the prologues to the *Alexander–Caesar* and the *Nicias–Crassus* (*Alex.* 1; *Nic.* 1). Both begin directly with mention of the two subjects in the first line: “Since it seems to me to be reasonable to compare Nicias with Crassus and the Parthian disaster (*pathēmata*) with the Sicilian ...” (*Nic.* 1.1); “As we

begin in this book to write the life of Alexander the King and the life of that Caesar by whom Pompey was overthrown ..." (*Alex.* 1.1). Both continue by addressing the reader immediately afterwards and asking for indulgence: in the *Nicias–Crassus* Plutarch declares, "it is time to beg and entreat those who come across these compositions of mine³³ ... in no way to assume that we have fallen victim to the same delusion (*pathos*) as Timaeus." In the *Alexander–Caesar* Plutarch makes a similar plea: "we shall, because of the number of deeds which are in prospect, make no other preface than to beg our readers not to quibble,³⁴ if we do not report all of their famous deeds." Both prologues then proceed to discuss methodological issues concerning how Plutarch will write the Lives that will follow; in both Plutarch distinguishes his work from that of other writers and in both what Plutarch says about his proposed techniques has more relevance to the first Life than to the second. In the case of the *Nicias–Crassus* most of the prologue sets out Plutarch's concern not to be seen as trying to rival Thucydides, which plainly has direct relevance only to the Greek Life, though the statement of intent on which the prologue ends ("not collecting a useless narrative but handing on one that contributes to an understanding of character and manner") is applicable to both Lives. The *Alexander–Caesar* prologue also attempts to distance Plutarch's work from that of other writers, though this time without naming them, and likewise bases this claim on the fact that his work brings out character; the claim made here to have placed more emphasis on revealing details or anecdotes than on military narrative is more relevant to the *Alexander* than to the *Caesar*.³⁵ Only the *Nicias–Crassus* prologue hints at a rationale for the pairing (the Sicilian and Parthian disasters); neither prologue lists the similarities of the two men. In effect, then, *Alex.* 1 and *Nic.* 1 combine and streamline the two sections which are kept separate in the other eleven prologues.³⁶

6. "Me," "Us," and "Them"

References to the narrator in the first person are common in prologues. The prologues thus play an important role in establishing Plutarch's persona as a man of learning and high moral values but also benign and sympathetic. In addition, the frequent use of first person plurals ("we," "us"), sometimes combined with first person singulars,³⁷ construct the readers as likewise learned, curious, and philosophically minded, sharing the same goals and the same attitudes as Plutarch.³⁸ Several prologues also allude to the possibility of other sorts of readers. In the *Alexander–Caesar* and *Nicias–Crassus* the possibility is raised of readers who might quibble at not being given a military narrative or who might assume that Plutarch would repeat what Thucydides and Philistus had said. Similarly, the *Demetrius–Antony* hints at readers who might expect merely to be entertained. But in all cases readers whose tastes are more aligned with Plutarch's own are assumed too; such less-than-ideal readers "constitute a foil for the more appropriate response which more sympathetic narratees will develop."³⁹

The *Alexander–Caesar* and *Nicias–Crassus* prologues also set up a contrast between other writers and Plutarch himself. In fact, such contrasts, often marked by *men* and *de*, between what other people, often other writers, do and what "I" or "we" do are particularly common in the prologues, usually in the second section.⁴⁰ We have already noted this phenomenon in the *Cimon–Lucullus*, where in 2.2 there is a contrast between the

citizens of Chaeronea and “us”; first person verbs then continue to the last sentence of the prologue. Similarly in the *Demetrius–Antony*, first person verbs first occur in the contrast, likewise marked by *men* and *de*, between “the Spartans of old” and “us” (1.5), though they fade when the two subjects are first named (1.7). Likewise in the *Phocion–Cato* first person pronouns first appear at 3.2, where there is a contrast between Cicero’s diagnosis of Cato’s problem (*ho men Kikerōn phēsīn*) and Plutarch’s own diagnosis (*emoi de*).

The *Demosthenes–Cicero* begins with a contrast between “the author of the encomium” of Alcibiades (*ho men grapsas*), who thought that happiness required residence in a famous city, and “me” (*egō de*) (1.1), who think that virtue can thrive anywhere. So “we,” Plutarch concludes, now slipping into the plural, should blame ourselves, not our city, for our failings (1.4). Now comes a second, related contrast: the person who intends to write history from scattered sources “really ought” (*tōi onti chrēn*) to live in a big city that can provide access to lots of books; but “we” (*hēmeis de*) have chosen to stay in a small one (2.1–2). Indeed, Plutarch continues, still speaking in the first person plural, since “we” came to Latin late, “we” are unable to undertake stylistic criticism of Latin literature, and so will compare Demosthenes and Cicero as statesmen not as orators (2.2–3.2). This is, of course, a brilliant piece of self-characterization: it constructs Plutarch the narrator as modest and knowing his limits, as cosmopolitan but also with a laudable local pride, while at the same time setting his work on Demosthenes and Cicero apart from that of other writers. The biographical note here shows that the first person plurals should be interpreted as referring primarily to the narrator; but the use of the plural here and elsewhere perhaps also suggests an inclusiveness, an assumption that readers will share the same attitudes as Plutarch, and a subtle encouragement to them so to do. And as in the *Alexander–Caesar* and *Nicias–Crassus*, just as there is an implicit contrast with what other writers might do, there is also a hint at other sorts of readers, those whose pretensions might balk at a historian who does not move to Athens or another great city or who might expect a stylistic criticism, against whom Plutarch and his ideal reader are set.⁴¹

The *Aemilius–Timoleon* prologue has a personal note from the start: its very first word is a first person singular pronoun (*Emoi*). First person verbs continue as Plutarch describes his experience – plainly intended as a model for the reader too – of the moral benefits to be gained from studying the great men of the past, enlivened by the image of such men as actually appearing to Plutarch and allowing him to get to know them and model his life on theirs. In 1.4–5, however, there is a contrast between the philosopher Democritus (*Dēmokritos men*), who believed that phantoms would visit us whether we want it or not, and “us” (*hēmeis de*), who “in our writing” turn our attention away from whatever may be base or ignoble and toward uplifting examples.⁴² The “we” here might suggest both Plutarch and the readers, but in the last sentence of the prologue, which introduces and names the two subjects, the “we” becomes more obviously authorial (“in the present [sc. book] (*en tōi paronti*) we have made ready for you (*prokecheirismetha soi*) the life of Timoleon the Corinthian and Aemilius Paulus”), an impression reinforced by the rather surprising second person singular, which might suggest Sosius Senecio, though other readers must be included too.⁴³

Such contrasts, and the introduction of first person pronouns and verbs, provide another structuring feature, another way of moving from the generalized reflections with which the prologues tend to begin to the more specific claims about the writing of a particular text.⁴⁴ In one case, however, the expectation of such a contrast is subverted. In the *Sertorius–Eumenes* we have near the start of the prologue what might appear initially

to be the first half of a contrast between the narrator and other writers, such as is common in other prologues: “some people” (*enioi*), Plutarch claims, delight in collecting instances of historical coincidences (1.3); a list of such instances follows (“two Atthis’s became famous ... and both were killed by a wild boar,” etc.). But then rather than a contrast we find “come then, let me add this one too” (1.8), before Sertorius is named as an example of the coincidence that many generals had one eye. Here Plutarch exploits the reader’s knowledge of the conventions of his prologues for special effect. But the result is the same, however: a way of moving from the general to the particular.⁴⁵

7. Closure

Many prologues end with a clear “closural” or “transitional” sentence – a sentence, that is, that signals the end of this part of the book (the prologue) and looks forward to the two Lives that follow. The *Cimon–Lucullus* prologue, for example, after running through various similarities between the two figures, concludes, “We pass over perhaps some additional similarities, but it will not be difficult to collect them from the narrative itself” (*Cim.* 3.3). The use of the term “narrative” (*diēgēsis*) is significant here, as it makes clear that the prologue itself is not narrative, and distinguishes it from the first Life.⁴⁶ A similar closural sentence that points forwards to the Lives that will follow is found at the end of the *Pelopidas–Marcellus* prologue, where a list of resemblances between the two men is concluded with, “So taking the lead from these similarities, we have recorded their Lives in parallel” (*Pel.* 2.12).

Several such transitional sentences implicitly invite the reader’s participation in judging the two men and assessing their similarities and differences. We have already noted the claim at the end of the *Phocion–Cato* for the difficulty of discerning differences between the two men (*Phoc.* 3.9). Similarly, the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue ends: “it would be difficult to judge whether nature made them more alike in their manners or fortune in the facts of their lives. But the discussion should be (*lektoon de*) about the older man first” (*Dem.* 3.5).⁴⁷ The *Aemilius–Timoleon* moves easily in a single sentence from introduction of the names of the two subjects – who are presented as “the fairest of examples” – to a list of their similarities, to a claim that, as the two men are so similar, “they will make it a matter of dispute whether the greatest of their successes were a result of their good fortune or their good sense” (*Aem.* 1.6). The *Pericles–Fabius* prologue, by contrast, invites the reader to assess Plutarch’s own performance in the two Lives that will follow: “But whether we aim correctly at what we should can be judged from my account” (*Per.* 2.5). As in the *Aemilius–Timoleon*, an implied address to the reader, and invitation to their active involvement, mark the end of the prologue.

Such transitional phrases, which find their mirror image toward the end of the book in the transitional phrases marking the passage from second Life to *synkrisis*,⁴⁸ make clear that the prologues are to be regarded as separate from the “narrative” or “Lives” that follow. A further proof of this separation is that most prologues are followed by asyndeton, that is, that first Lives proper which follow prologues begin without a connective particle. Of the thirteen pairs of Lives which have prologues, in nine cases the first Life proper begins with no connective of any kind.⁴⁹ The other four cases (*Per.* 3.1; *Nic.* 2.1; *Phoc.* 4.1;⁵⁰ *Demetr.* 2.1) have explanatory or inferential particles (“for,” “so,”

“therefore”) – but never the simple connective *de*.⁵¹ It is instructive to note that, in contrast, only six second Lives begin with asyndeton,⁵² and of these the opening of one (*Caes.*) is almost certainly corrupt.⁵³ All other second Lives (sixteen cases) have the connective *de*; indeed, in six cases, the *de* at the start of the second Life picks up a *men* in the last sentence of the first, thus providing forward motion from one to the other and reducing the sense of a gap between them. Thus in many books there is a stronger break between the prologue and first Life than between first Life and second.⁵⁴

8. Books Without Prologues

What finally of those nine books (or eight, if we discount the *Them.-Cam.*) that begin with no prologue? Philip Stadter in his important study of 1988 described these as beginning with an “informal proem.” According to Stadter, such informal proems introduce explicitly only the first Life of a pair, and make use of a set of standard topics: the subject’s family, education, and physical appearance; they also often contain references to, or discussion of, sources. Stadter described the purpose of informal proems as “arousing interest in his [Plutarch’s] book and establishing goodwill toward the author.”⁵⁵

In fact, however, the features which Stadter picks out are not unique to the beginning of these books but are simply characteristic of the beginning of Lives. Most Lives, whether they fall first or second in their book, and (in the case of first Lives), whether they are preceded by a prologue or not, begin with a thematically organized section, marked off with varying degrees of distinctness from the narrative that follows.⁵⁶ Such sections often employ the topics that Stadter noted, to which may be added that of character.⁵⁷ In addition, they tend not to be structured chronologically, or at least the *logic* of their structure is not chronological. Openings of Lives may accordingly contain static discussions or descriptions, anecdotes without narrative context, or references to events or behavior drawn from any period of the subject’s life. Very often such material serves to introduce the character of the subject and to foreshadow themes and images that will recur later in the Life or events that will later be important.⁵⁸ Such thematic, or “synoptic,” sections occur at the opening of both first and second Lives. They thus relate to the Life which they begin, not to the book, and should not be confused with prologues; indeed, whereas Stadter’s categorization implied that “formal” and “informal” prologues would be mutually exclusive, in fact, even first Lives which immediately follow a prologue may begin with such a thematic opening.⁵⁹ The category of informal proems, then, is unnecessary; it makes more sense to regard these eight books which lack prologues as simply beginning immediately with the first Life.⁶⁰

APPENDIX: THE CONSTITUENT PARTS OF A BOOK OF PARALLEL LIVES

A. Books with both a prologue and a synkrisis (11 books)

Theseus–Romulus, Cimon–Lucullus, Pericles–Fabius, Nicias–Crassus, Demosthenes–Cicero, Dion–Brutus, Aemilius–Timoleon, Sertorius–Eumenes, Pelopidas–Marcellus, Demetrius–Antony, Agis/Cleomenes–Gracchi.

B. Books with a prologue but no synkrisis (2 books)

Phocion–Cato Minor, Alexander–Caesar.

C. Books with a synkrisis but no prologue (7 books)

Solon–Publicola, Aristides–Cato Major, Coriolanus–Alcibiades, Philopoemen–Flamininus, Lysurgus–Numa, Lysander–Sulla, Agesilaus–Pompey.

D. Books with neither prologue nor synkrisis (2 books)

Pyrrhus–Marius, Themistocles–Camillus (but *Them.* 1 is corrupt and there may have been a prologue).

NOTES

- 1 Plutarch himself uses the term “book” (*biblion*) at *Per.* 2.5 and *Dem.* 3.1. In *Dion* 2.7 and *Thes.* 1.4 *logos* (“work”) and in *Dion* 1.1 *graphē* (“writing”) seem to be used as synonyms for “book”; cf. also *Aem.* 1.6; *Sert.* 1.8.
- 2 Including one book which contains a double-pairing: the Lives of Agis and Cleomenes are set alongside those of Gaius and Tiberius Gracchus in a single book, with a single prologue and single *synkrisis*. See Duff (2011) appendix 1.
- 3 On Plutarch’s use of the term *synkrisis*, see Stiefenhofer (1914–1916) 482; Duff (1999) 252–253 n. 35 and (2011) 252.
- 4 They have also been variously labeled “prefaces,” “proems,” “common introductions” (Stiefenhofer (1914–1916)), and “formal proems” (Stadter (1988)). The term prologue has the advantage of suggesting a structural correspondence with the synkritic “epilogue.” Plutarch does not label the prologues himself, but once refers to what he does in a prologue with the verb *prolegō*, “say in advance” (*Alex.* 1.1), a cognate of *prologos*, and once with *proanaphōnēsai*, “declare in advance” (*Pel.* 2.9).
- 5 See Duff (2008b) 176–179.
- 6 Books without a prologue are: *Sol.-Pub.*, *Arist.-Cat.* *Mai.*, *Cor.-Alc.*, *Phil.-Flam.*, *Pyrrh.-Mar.*, *Lyc.-Num.*, *Lys.-Sulla*, *Ages.-Pomp.*, plus the *Them.-Cam.* I take here a slightly different line from Stadter (1988), who argued for the category of “informal” proems: see p. 343. I do not find Rosenmeyer (1992) at all helpful, as he fails to distinguish between prologues to books and beginnings of Lives; this confusion leads him to conclude that Plutarch “has no proemial method.”
- 7 This is argued further in Duff (2011) 214–224, 263–264.
- 8 Cf. Duff (1999) 53; Zadorojnyi (2006) 103.
- 9 Esp. *Per.-Fab.*, *Nic.-Crass.*, *Aem.-Tim.*, *Alex.-Caes.*, *Demetr.-Ant.* Discussion of this aspect of these prologues: Duff (1999) 13–51.
- 10 E.g. Nature of virtue: *Cim.-Luc.* (esp. *Cim.* 2.3–5); *Dem.-Cic.* (esp. *Dem.* 1); *Pel.-Marc.*; *Dion-Brut.*; *Phoc.-Cat. Min.*; *Demetr.-Ant.*; *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi*. Revelation of character: *Nic.-Crass.* (esp. *Nic.* 1.5); *Alex.-Caes.* Improvement of reader: *Per.-Fab.*; *Aem.-Tim.*; *Demetr.-Ant.*
- 11 Cf. Burlando (2000) 62; Van der Stockt (2009) 193–195, on the similar delay in naming the subject in the prologue to Philostratus’ *Life of Apollonius* (1.2).
- 12 One of the functions of rhetorical prologues according to ancient theoreticians: see e.g. the passages cited in Lausberg (1960) § 269–271.

- 13 *Thes.* 1.1; *Dem.* 1.1; *Dion* 1.1. Cf. Pelling (2002b) 270. The second person singular is also used in two prologues (*Ag./Cleom.* 2.9; *Aem.* 1.6), where Sosius may be implied but perhaps other readers too. The only other address to Sosius in the Lives is once in the transition from a first Life to second (*Dem.* 31.7). There are no other second persons in the prologues (excluding quotations). Contrast the prologue to the *Aratus* (not one of the *Parallel Lives*), with its dedication to Polycrates of Sicyon (1.3) and its frequent use of the second person: Duff (2011) appendix 3.
- 14 *oun: Per.* 2.5; *d' oun: Thes.* 2.1; *Cim.* 3.1; *dio: Dem.* 3.1; *tauta de: Phoc.* 3.1; *Pel.* 2.9; *Ag./Cleom.* 2.7; *touto dē: Demetr.* 1.7; *Sert.* 1.11; *hōn* (equivalent to *toutōn*): *Aem.* 1.6.
- 15 For the term “book,” see above, n. 1. On references to the writing process, cf. Pelling (2002b) 269.
- 16 Though not part of the *Parallel Lives*, the prologue to the *Aratus* also follows this structure: reflections on the right and wrong ways to praise one’s ancestors, beginning with a quotation (1.1–4) [section 1], are followed by the naming of the subject and reference to the writing process (introduced by *dio*) [section 2]. Similarly *Galba* 1–2, which forms a prologue to *Galba* and *Otho*, and probably the lost *Vitellius*, begins with generalized reflections, enlivened by quotations and anecdotes, and ends with a discussion of the emperors and a reference to the writing process (2.5), but there is no clear transition or naming. On the *Aratus* prologue, see Duff (2011) appendix 3; on the *Galba* prologue, Stadter (1988) 294–295; Georgiadou (1988) 349–352; Ash (1997) esp. 191–196; Duff (1999) 28–29.
- 17 Cf. *historēsasīn* at 1.4 and *tēi historiai* at 2.4.
- 18 On the *Per.-Fab.* prologue, see Duff (1999) 34–45.
- 19 On the *Demetr.-Ant.* prologue, see Duff (1999) 45–49; (2004).
- 20 *paralogōs*: not “rashly” (Perrin), as Beneker (2012) 66 clearly demonstrates.
- 21 On the *Pel.-Marc.* prologue, cf. Georgiadou (1997) 45–47 and 64–65; Ingenkamp (2008) 271–273.
- 22 The same pattern can be seen in the prologue to the *Aem.-Tim.* Recognizing that *Aem.* 1 is the prologue to the whole *Aemilius-Timoleon* book confirms that the mss. order, in which the *Aem.* (the Roman Life) precedes the *Tim.* (the Greek Life), is correct; the same is true of *Sert.* 1 and the *Sertorius-Eumenes*. See Duff (2011) 220–221.
- 23 Such suspense would be heightened if the two subjects were not named in a title at the start of the book: see Duff (2011) 214, 264 (esp. n. 232).
- 24 On the *Dem.-Cic.* prologue, see also below and Burlando (2000); Mossman (1999); Zadorojnyi (2006).
- 25 The metaphor of the wrestling school (*palaistra*) for a person’s origin is common (e.g. *Ant.* 9.7 with Pelling (1988) ad loc.), but has particular point here given that the original Academy *was* a place for exercise.
- 26 The verb *proeisagein*, which LSJ glosses as “introduce in a work of literature,” citing only this passage, is almost certainly a stage or law-court metaphor (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1336b; Plut. *De soll. an.* 965e; Zenob. Soph. [second century CE], Epitome 5.40). Cf. *epeisagagein* (“bring on the stage in addition”) in *Demetr.* 53.10, which from the context (“Now that the Macedonian drama has been played to the end ...”) is certainly a stage metaphor.
- 27 On the prologue to the unique double-pair, *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi*, which exploits in a surprising way the typical features of prologues to the *Parallel Lives*, see Duff (2011) appendix 1.
- 28 For discussion of the *Thes.-Rom.* prologue, see also Pelling (1999) 431–433, expanded in (2002a) 171–174; Bowie (2008) 152–153, on the poetic quotations in *Thes.* 1.1–4; Cooper (2007) on allusions here to Polybius.
- 29 Mistranslated by Perrin in his Loeb edition as “though not for their resemblances *but* on the ground that both were good men and devoted to the state” (my italics).
- 30 On the *Phoc.-Cat. Min.* prologue, cf. also below, and Tritle (1992) 4266–4268; Duff (1999) 137–141; Van Meirvenne (2002) 142–153.

- 31 This narrative is studied by Ma (1994), MacKay (2000), Ellinger (2005), and Beck (2007).
- 32 Introductory narrative involving Lucullus (*Cim.* 1–2.1); reflections (*Cim.* 2.2–5); naming of second subject and rationale for comparison (*Cim.* 3). On the *Cim.-Luc.* prologue, cf. also Duff (1999) 59–60.
- 33 *tous entugchanontas tous suggrammasi toutois*. The verb *entugchanō* means “read” (cf. Marasco (1976) ad loc.) but also “meet,” “come across” (as by chance). See Pelling (2002b) 276–277 on the contrast implied in both *Nic.* 1 and *Alex.* 1 between serious readers and the more frivolous readers. For a similar contrast in the *Demetr.-Ant* prologue, see Duff (2004) 278–279.
- 34 *sukophantein*: the translation is Pelling’s (2002b) 276–277.
- 35 Pelling (1980) 135–139 (= (1995) 142–152; (2002a) 102–107); (2006) 266–267; Duff (1999) 20–21, with further bibliography.
- 36 On the *Alex.-Caes.* and *Nic.-Crass.* prologues, see Wardman (1971) and esp. Duff (1999) 14–22. On the *Nic.-Cras.* prologue alone, see also Wardman (1974) 154–157; Citti (1983); Franco (1991) 125–127; Frazier (1996) 32–34.
- 37 First persons: *Thes.* 1.2 (sing.), 1.4 (sing. and pl.), 1.5 (sing.); *Cim.* 2.2–3, 3.1, 3.3 (pl.); *Per.* 1.2, 1.4, 2.3, 2.5 (pl.); *Dem.* 1.1 (sing.), 1.4, 2.2–4 (pl.); 3.1 (pl.), 3.4 (sing.); *Phoc.* 3.2 (sing.), 3.6 (pl.), 4.1 (sing.); *Sert.* 1.8, 11 (pl.); *Dion* 2.5 (sing.), 2.7 (pl.); *Aem.* 1.1 (sing.), 1.2–6 (pl.); *Pel.* 2.9 (sing.), 2.12 (pl.); *Ag./Cleom.* 2.6, 7, 9 (pl.); *Demetr.* 1.1, 1.5–6 (pl.). First persons recur in the *synkriseis*: *Thes.-Rom.* 1.1 (pl.), 1.6 (sing.); *Sol.-Pub.* 1.3, 4.1 (pl.); *Lyc.-Num.* 1.1, 1.10, 2.10, 3.6 (pl.); *Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3.3 (pl.), 5.3 (sing.); *Cim.-Luc.* 1.8 (sing.); *Per.-Fab.* 1.1 (pl.); *Dem.-Cic.* 1.1 (sing.), 1.2 (pl.); *Nic.-Crass.* 2.3 (pl.), 3.2 (sing.); *Cor.-Alc.* 1.1 (pl.); *Flam.* 21.15 (pl.); *Phil.-Flam.* 3.5 (pl.); *Pel.-Marc.* 1.1, 1.8 (pl.), 3.1–2 (sing.); *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi* 1.1 (pl.), 5.7 (sing.); *Lys.-Sulla* 1.1 (pl.), 1.5 (sing.), 3.7 (sing.), 5.1 (sing.), 5.6 (pl.); *Ages.-Pomp.* 1.1 (pl.), 3.1–2 (sing.).
- 38 Stadter (1988) 290, 292–293; Pelling (2002b) 269–278.
- 39 Pelling (2002b) 276.
- 40 Cf. Van der Stockt (2009) 200, on the late appearance of the narratorial “I.”
- 41 On this aspect of the *Dem.-Cic.* prologue, see Russell (1993) 428; Pelling (2002b) 271–273, 276.
- 42 The notion that we may turn our mind to subjects which benefit it, and the contrast implied with the senses, which must receive whatever impressions reach them, is one found also in the *Demetr.-Ant.* and *Per.-Fab.* prologues. See p. 335.
- 43 On the first and second persons in the *Aem.-Tim.* prologue, see Pelling (2002b) 273.
- 44 Interestingly, it is in those prologues where there is no such contrast between me/us and others that first person verbs run to the very end of the prologue. In *Per.-Fab.* first person verbs are at first generalized (*Per.* 1.2, 1.4, 2.3), but at 2.5, with the reference to the writing process itself, “us” (*hēmin*) plainly now refers specifically to the author. First person verbs continue to the very end of the prologue and the transitional sentence (“But whether we aim correctly ...”). In *Pel.-Marc.* first person pronouns and verbs begin at *Pel.* 2.9 (“These things occurred to me”) and run to the very end, including the transitional sentence (2.12). Similarly, in *Dion-Brut.* first person singulars and plurals first occur in *Dion* 2.5 and run through to the final transitional sentence (2.7).
- 45 The contrast in *Thes.* 1 is a little more complex. The prologue begins “Just as (*bōsper*) historians in their geographies” pass over material on the edges of maps with hardly a mention (1.1). There is then not a contrast but “so for me (*houtōs emoi*) it made sense to say ...” Finally comes the adversative, “But since (*epei de*), having published ... we thought it not unreasonable to set the founder of lovely Athens against ...” (1.4). Compare the prologue to Luke’s Gospel, “Since many have tried to draw up a narrative (*diēgēsēin*) ... so it seemed right to me (*edoxe kamoi*) ...” (1.1–3), on which see Robbins (1999) 71–76.

- 46 The same term is used at the end of the prologue to the *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi*, where Plutarch invites the reader to judge for himself “from the narrative” (*ek tēs diēgēsēs*), that is, from the Lives that will follow (*Ag./Cleom.* 2.9). It is also used in the first words of the *synkrisis* to the same book, where Plutarch talks about “surveying” the Lives that have preceded “in parallel,” “now that that this narrative (*diēgēsēs*) [i.e. the two Lives] has ended” (*synk. Ag./Cleom.-Gracch.* 1.1). Cf. *synk. Aem.-Tim.* 1.1, “since they were like this in their narrative” (*kata tēn historian*).
- 47 Cf. the transitional phrase at the end of the *Dion-Brut.* prologue (*Dion* 2.7), ending, “let us bring forward on to the stage first that of the older man.”
- 48 On such transitional phrases from second Life to *synkrisis*, see Duff (2011) 250–253.
- 49 *Thes.* 3.1; *Cim.* 4.1; *Dion* 3.1; *Aem.* 2.1; *Sert.* 2.1; *Pel.* 3.1; *Alex.* 2.1; *Demetr.* 2.1; *Ag./Cleom.* 3.1. Similarly the prologues in *Arat.* 1 and *Galb.* 1–2 are followed by asyndeton in *Arat.* 2.1 and *Galb.* 3.1. For asyndeton after prologues, cf. also e.g. Xen. *Cyropaed.* 1.2.1; Luke 1.5; Arrian, *Anab.* 1.1; Philostr. *VS* 480 (start of book 1); *VA* 1.3.
- 50 On the transition from prologue to first Life in the *Phocion-Cat. Min.* see Duff (2011) n. 52.
- 51 *gar, oun, men oun, toinun* respectively: Stadter (1988) 276.
- 52 *Rom., Fab.* (counting the beginning as *Fab.* 1.2 not 1.1), *Alc., Caes., Ant., Mar.*
- 53 Corruption of the start of *Caes.*: Duff (2011) appendix 2, with bibliography. In addition, *Pomp.* 1.1 contains asyndeton in some mss., a *de* (which Ziegler prints) in others. Van der Valk (1982) 305–306 and 325–327 noticed that some second Lives open with *de*, but his analysis is marred by (1) taking *Cor.* and *Aem.* as second Lives, and (2) counting prologues as part of the first Life and not distinguishing between first Lives that follow a prologue and first Lives that begin a book.
- 54 For details, see Duff (2011) 223–224, 246–250.
- 55 Stadter (1988) 287.
- 56 On the way Lives typically begin, see Duff (2011) 224–242.
- 57 First described by Leo (1901) 180–182. Leo noted in passing, rightly, that some of the material in this section applies to the whole of the subject’s life and not just his youth.
- 58 Foreshadowing: Duff (2003); (2008a) 191–204; (2008b); cf. (1999) 162–168. See also Pelling (1988) 117 and Duff (1999) 310–311 on the prefiguring function of discussions of ancestors.
- 59 Particularly clear examples in *Per.* 3–6; *Alex.* 2–8; *Demetr.* 2–4; also *Galb.* 3 (though *Galba* is not one of the *Parallel Lives*). Stadter’s claim ((1988) 276) that “similar passages do not usually appear in the second Life of a pair” is untrue: thematic openings are very common, some with a display of sources (e.g. *Fab.* 1.2–9; *Cic.* 1–2; *Mar.* 1–2; *Num.* 1).
- 60 I argue this further in Duff (2008a) 187–191, and especially (2011) 216–218, 238–242. I note there that a few Lives do not have such a thematic opening, but rather pitch straight into narrative. Such “bare” openings are rare but do occur in either a first Life after a prologue (*Dion, Theseus*) or a second Life (*Romulus, Timoleon*) – but never in a first Life which is not preceded by a prologue. In other words, no *book* ever begins directly with narrative (or rather, with narrative of the life of the first subject, as opposed to another figure: the prologue to the *Cim.-Luc.* begins with a long story about Damon of Chaeronea).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The seminal article on the prologues is Stadter (1988), though I reject here his category of “informal prologues.” Rosenmeyer (1992) is unhelpful. Pelling (2002b) is key on Plutarch’s characterization of himself and his readers in the prologues. A detailed study of the structure of the Plutarchan book, and of the place of the prologues within it, is provided by Duff (2011).

Close readings of the prologues to *Alex.-Caes.*, *Nic.-Crass.*, *Aem.-Tim.*, *Per.-Fab.*, and *Demetr.-Ant.* are found in Duff (1999) 13–51. Bibliography on other prologues is given in the endnotes.

CHAPTER 24

Morality, Characterization, and Individuality

Anastasios G. Nikolaidis

This chapter will explore the nature of Plutarch's moralism and methods of characterization as attested in the *Lives*, but also with reference to his convictions about virtue and vice as set out in the *Moralia*. However, since morality pertains to what is good and bad or right and wrong, it would be appropriate to begin our investigation with a brief survey of some essays which, despite their rhetorical character, seem to reveal much of Plutarch's moral outlook at large.

1. Some Theoretical Background

Planudes' very first edition of the *Moralia* corpus is headed by the brief essay *On Virtue and Vice* (100B–101D), most probably a scrap of a larger work.¹ Therein Plutarch maintains that only virtue can ensure a pleasant and happy life, and that a happy life emanates from one's inner rather than outer world. In other words, happiness is a form of self-sufficiency or *autarkeia*,² but to be self-sufficient, one will first have to learn what the good is. A corollary to this treatise is the badly mutilated rhetorical piece on *Whether Vice Alone is Enough to Cause Unhappiness* (498A–500A), a question which Plutarch answers in the affirmative; for, even in cases where one becomes unhappy and wretched as victim of a great calamity, Plutarch will say that succumbing to the blows of fortune is not inevitable, if one's vice has not already prepared the ground for it (cf. 499D). Such a rigorous sermon, hardly typical of Plutarch who as a rule sympathizes with the frailty of human nature (see below), must rather be ascribed to the rhetorical nature of this treatise; yet the other side of the coin, namely, that misfortune (*tyché*) cannot take one's virtue away, is recognizable in several other parts of his oeuvre. At *Sert.* 10.6, for example, Plutarch unequivocally declares that no misfortune can convert virtue to its opposite, if

virtue is genuine and grounded upon reason; a truth that the *Phocion–Cato Minor* pair conspicuously bears out.³

Being a teacher,⁴ Plutarch has no doubts that virtue, regarded as an art, is teachable like all other arts, as we see in his *Whether Virtue Can Be Taught* (439A–440C). In this tract, however, Plutarch identifies virtue with *phronêsis* and happiness, the latter being the outcome of the former (cf. above *De virt. et vit.* 101D). On the other hand, he is perfectly aware of the conflicting claims of virtue and fortune on human affairs, as his epideictic orations *On the Fortune of the Romans* and *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* demonstrate (see also above and cf. *Phoc.* 3.4–5 and *Tim.* 19.1, 21.5, and 36.4). Besides, in his essay *On Fortune* (*peri tychês*) he belittles the importance of fortune or chance and glorifies that of reason or intelligence (*phronêsis*) as the hallmark of a human being.⁵ Thanks to our intelligence we have overpowered and are superior to wild beasts, albeit much less powerful in physical strength than they are. Intelligence and not chance has created our civilization, whereas undeserved good fortune can be a source of unhappiness for the unwise (100A).⁶

Given the paramount importance of reason, Plutarch maintains that mental diseases are worse than bodily ones (see his treatise on the *Affections of Mind and Affections of Body*, 500B–502A): for, when the mind is sick, it is affected in the very part by which it judges; as a result, it cannot be aware of its own afflictions and, therefore, neither can it cure itself (500E). As Plutarch tells us elsewhere, it is through reason that we overcome our passions (*De garr.* 510C: *tôn ... pathôn krisei ... periginometha*), which means that, to achieve this, we must first perceive, with the help of reason (*logôî*), the damage and shame in which passions involve us (510D).⁷ Hence, the worst mental disease is ignorance, for it is ignorance that makes one ill-judge one's actions and mistake one's flaws for virtues (501A–B; cf. also *Mor.* 56B–E and 483A). In other words, it is through ignorance that vice (*kakia*) creeps into – and eventually takes roots in – one's soul (500F), a conclusion that unmistakably recalls the Socratic equation of virtue with knowledge. Accordingly, at *Art.* 28.4 we are told that most people desire the bad out of inexperience and ignorance of the good.

Despite his well-known allegiance to Plato, it appears that Plutarch's moral theory is in many respects closer to Aristotle and the Peripatetics, regardless of whether his knowledge of Aristotle's ethical works was direct or indirect.⁸ This is evident not only in his tract *On Moral Virtue*⁹ and many other essays (e.g. those applying the Aristotelian *mesotês*),¹⁰ but also in the *Lives* where, as Russell ((1966) 144 = (1995) 81) aptly remarks, “the Aristotelian ethical doctrines are the basis of Plutarch's views on character.”¹¹ After all, the biographical genre, which not only satisfied Plutarch's deep interest in ethical matters but also suited his strong practical bent through the historical examples it provided, originated with the Peripatos, if not with Aristotle himself.¹²

Plutarch's essay *On Moral Virtue* is crucial for our understanding of his moral theory. Here, a man's soul is divided into two parts, the rational and the irrational (where the feelings, emotions, instincts, and passions belong). The rational part should guide and control the irrational, yet moral virtue is not attained by the complete dominance of reason over the passions, but by its harmonious coexistence and cooperation with them (443C). Passions, therefore, are not to be eradicated altogether, as the Stoic ideal of *apatheia* enjoins, but only to be managed and kept under control; for passions, provided they do not revolt against reason to overthrow it,¹³ are not merely necessary but even

useful, since they may intensify the virtues. A moderate anger/*thymos*, for instance, will assist bravery/*andreia*, while the hatred of evil/*misoponēria* will aid justice/*dikaiosynē* (451D–E). This is why lawgivers, to kindle the ambition of their youth, encourage emulation and rivalry among them by publicly allotting praise and blame; the former encourages and revives the desire for noble deeds, whereas the latter, through the regret and shame it engenders, makes the person involved seek to improve and make amends (452B–D; cf. also *Ages.* 5.5; *Lys.* 2.3; *Lyc.* 14.5–6; *Ag.* 2.2).

In other words, passions are the raw material, as it were, of the *psychē* which awaits molding, shaping, and direction by its rational part, and it is precisely this process that gives rise to moral action (cf. 443C: *poiôtēs tou alogou to êthos*). Depending, that is, on the molding which the *psychē* undergoes, and the degree of control and influence that reason exercises on its irrational part, passions can either inspire and spur to noble actions or, in case they are immoderate and ineffectively controlled, lead to great disasters. Cleomenes' passionate temper, for example, was always goading him toward whatever he regarded as the honorable course (*Cleom.* 1.4), whereas Marius' similar temper drove him to a most cruel and savage old age (*Mar.* 2.1, 4). Themistocles' ambition (*philotimia*) to surpass Miltiades' glory at Marathon, duly directed by his perspicacity, namely, by his reasoning powers, led to the triumph of Salamis, but Coriolanus' *philotimia*, inadequately checked by the rational part of his soul, allowed anger to overwhelm him and make him march, along with the enemies of Rome, against his own country (*Cor.* 15.4–5, 21.1–2). Keeping his innate passions of ambition and contentiousness (*philotimia/philonikia*) under control, Agesilaus manages to save Sparta (cf. *Ages.* 33.2 and *Comp. Ages.-Pomp.* 4.7); but when the very same passions get the upper hand at the expense of his sound-mindedness, he, who would often glorify justice as the highest virtue, is reduced to tolerating and excusing the greatest injustice (*Ages.* 23.6–11). Hence, at *Cr.* 27.6 *philotimia* is linked with *aboulia* (= thoughtlessness).

The application, therefore, of all this theorizing in the *Moralia* to the *Lives* is, as we see, extensive. Among several other things, the careers of Plutarch's heroes reveal how these men coped with the calamities that befell them (Pompey and Sertorius, for example, were overpowered by adversity (*Caes.* 45.7; *Sert.* 10.6–7), whereas Antony was particularly resilient in hardships (*Ant.* 17.4–5), and Aemilius bore with greatness the sudden loss of his sons; cf. *Aem.* 35–36 and *Comp. Aem.-Tim.* 2.10), the role of *tyché* in their exploits (see esp. the *Aemilius-Timoleon* and cf. *Aem.* 1.6), the quality of their education (which, on the one hand, cures their inexperience and ignorance and, on the other, tames and controls their passions)¹⁴ and, above all, how effectively their reason fashions and controls the irrational part of their soul; for it is ultimately by this criterion that Plutarch often evaluates his protagonists. Coriolanus, for example, fails because his reason proves unable to control his anger (see above and also *Comp. Cor.-Alc.* 2.4 and 4.4), and Philopoemen, unlike Flaminius who conducts all his military operations thoughtfully (*logismói*), loses his life in a fit of anger and contentiousness (*Comp. Phil.-Flam.* 1.7); and so do Pelopidas and Marcellus (*Pel.* 2.9–11, 32.9; *Marc.* 29.3; *Comp. Pel.-Marc.* 3.3).¹⁵ Following his own best counsels and enduring many calumnies and accusations from various quarters, Agesilaus is successful (*Comp. Ages.-Pomp.* 4.7–8), whereas Pompey fails, because his fear of disrepute and his reluctance to displease his friends made him abandon his own best thoughts (*Pomp.* 67.7: *tous aristous logismous*) in order to gratify the morbid desires of his army (cf. also *Comp. Ages.-Pomp.* 4.3–4). Marius fails because,

inter alia, he had no political training and was totally untouched by Hellenic *paideia* (*Mar.* 2.2).¹⁶ Demetrius and Antony fail because they were arrogant amid their successes and too weak *vis-à-vis* their passions (*Comp. Demetr.-Ant.* 3). Nicias fails because his superstitious fears nullify his reasoning power (cf. *Nic.* 23.1, 9 and contrast *Per.* 35.2). On the other hand, Pericles is successful because he is confident in and abides by his own judgment, ignoring the pressure of the multitude and calmly bearing with its disapproval and fury (*Per.* 33.6–34.1), virtues acquired through his philosophical education, according to Plutarch (*Per.* 4–6, 8).¹⁷ Camillus also was the first and foremost citizen of Rome thanks to his prudence (*phronêsis*).

2. The Moral Purpose of the *Lives*

The moral purpose of Plutarch's essays – especially the practical tenor of his ethics – manifests itself already in their titles (e.g. *On Virtue and Vice, Is Virtue Teachable?, On Moral Virtue, On How a Man Becomes Aware of His Progress in Virtue, Can Vice Alone Cause Unhappiness?, On the Control of Anger, On How to Distinguish a Flatterer from a Friend, On How to Profit from Your Enemies*, etc.), but in his biographies one might also expect to find (especially if one is open to modern biographical trends) – besides factual information, judgments on various events, and an assessment of the hero's character, abilities, and achievements – insights that might help the reader to understand and appreciate the hero as a personality at large rather than merely recognize the excellence or deficiency of his character; in other words, a modern reader would perhaps prefer to watch the hero in action under the motivation of his whole psychological frame, instead of viewing him simply as a moral agent, a representative or exponent of virtues or vices, a man who through his deeds exemplifies and illustrates concrete moral qualities.¹⁸ Hence, Gill (1983) 470ff. rightly points out that, unlike modern biographies, which are written from a "personality viewpoint" (the biographers try to empathize with their subject and "get inside their skin"), Plutarch composes his *Lives* from a "character viewpoint," where the priority belongs to the ethical evaluation (p. 473; cf. also Gill (1990) 2–3).

On the basis of some of Plutarch's own programmatic statements and his unquestionable interest in ethical character, Gill's distinction is correct to a great extent. Indeed, insofar as the *Lives* purport to supply models for imitation, the emphasis on character is expectable, but this does not mean that Plutarch's biographical interest is exhausted in allotting praise and blame, as Gill appears to believe ((1983) 471). Plutarch, despite his moralistic bias, is an exceptionally broadminded intellect and, as will be seen, is not at all indifferent to aspects of his heroes' personalities outside and beyond their moral behavior. If he, nevertheless, does not always offer satisfactory explanations for some quirky or irrational reaction or for unexpected, unforeseeable, or merely startling conduct, thus supposedly proving to be unable to get inside the skin of his heroes when they turn quirky or behave and act irrationally, we should not forget that Plutarch may have his own ax to grind, his own interests, but also his own limitations; further, that psychology is a modern science, that very few ancient authors (perhaps only Euripides) attempt to provide psychological interpretations of conduct, and that not all modern biographers take it to be their duty (and why should they?) to psychoanalyze their subjects *à la* Irvin Yalom (cf. also Pelling (1988b) 262f. = (Pelling, 2002) 287f.).¹⁹ Moreover, all other

parameters aside (Freud, psychoanalysis, science etc.; cf. Gill (1990) 2–3), one might wonder whether modern biographers would be able to get inside the skin of forty-eight individuals, even if we disregard the chronological gap between biographer and his subjects. In any case, Edel (1984) 28–30 believes that Plutarch “understands his subject’s dreams”; Pelling (1990b) 235 admits that “understanding people” was one of the things that Plutarch was trying to do, although it was not always his priority;²⁰ and Jones (1982) maintains that “in some ways he [sc. Plutarch] anticipates not so much the objective biography of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the *psychological* biography of the twentieth” (p. 963a, my emphasis).

On the whole, Plutarch does take interest in the personality of his heroes and, indeed, several *Lives* contain much information and comments that do not simply reveal and evaluate the hero’s character, but rather illuminate aspects of his wider personality (cf. Pelling (1990b) 229–230). Consider, for instance, Alcibiades’ treatment of his metic lover (*Alc.* 5) or the anecdotal information regarding the beautiful tail of his dog (which he cut off so that the Athenians would talk about this and say nothing worse about him). The way Sulla fell for Valeria (incidentally, an excellent description as well as proof of Plutarch’s art to envision and immortalize moments) lays bare the personality of Sulla rather than his character (*Sull.* 35.5–11); and so also does Pompey’s treatment of Flora (*Pomp.* 2.5–6). In any case, Plutarch, who is not a modern biographer and shares neither our tastes nor our predilections, is rightfully entitled to his own mindset. In agreement, then, with the spirit of the age and a very long tradition before him (see, e.g., Gill’s remarks (1983) 472–473 on contemporary Roman historiography and Duff (1999a) 52–53), he embarks on his biographical project intending, no doubt, to bring into prominence the great Greeks and Romans of the past, but ultimately aspiring to set forth through them diachronic ethical *exempla* for his readers (cf. Brenk (2008)); this he will achieve by evaluating the character and the deeds of his protagonists, in other words, by disclosing the ethical qualities (or lack thereof) that endorsed their excellence and underlied their successes or failures. According to Westaway (1922) 202, the *Parallel Lives* “form one long deliberate lesson in morality as drawn in history” or, as Wardman (1974) 94 more recently put it, “the *Lives* are in general a study of *areté* as it is active in the world.”

Plutarch himself unequivocally confirms that dominant interest in ethical character in several programmatic statements of his *Lives*.²¹ He believes that a man’s character, namely, his virtue or vice, is not necessarily revealed only through grandiose deeds, but also through such slight things as a phrase or a jest, which, however, may betray more candidly one’s *psyché*. Thus, in writing the *Lives of Alexander and Caesar*, he intends to depict the life of each, not so much on the basis of their achievements as by means of the signs of their soul, namely, of signs that betray their *character* (*Alex.* 1.2–3).²² Similarly, he composes the *Life of Nicias* neither to vie with Thucydides nor to amass useless historical details, but to hand down material that will help the reader to understand the *character* and the manners of the persons involved (*Nic.* 1.5). Further, he also wrote the *Life of Lucullus* in the belief that a portrait revealing Lucullus’ *character* is more beautiful than a statue representing his external appearance (*Cim.* 2.2).

The prologue to *Pericles–Fabius* is the most profound in this connection (*contra* Rosenmeyer (1992) 221: “Plutarch at his most skittish and disconcerting”). We should engage our minds, Plutarch says, with objects that are not beautiful simply to observe, but also capable of stimulating and nourishing our intellect. Such objects are to be

found in virtuous deeds, because, unlike other spectacles, the observation of such deeds makes the spectator not only admire the doer but also eagerly want to imitate his actions (*Per.* 1.3–4; cf. also *Max. cum princ.* 776C); which, incidentally, is a clear sign of moral progress, as we are told in the treatise *On Progress in Virtue* (84E).²³ It seems, then, that goodness creates a stir of activity toward itself; yet it does not form the character of the observer simply by the zeal for imitation which it implants in him, but – more importantly – by furnishing him, through the examination of the deed, with a solid moral principle (*Per.* 2.4). Plutarch lives up to this conviction and, as he is composing the *Lives*, he tries, using history as a mirror, to adorn and fashion his own life in conformity with the virtues of his subjects (*Aem.* 1.1); a procedure particularly efficacious for moral improvement (*Aem.* 1.3).²⁴ To this effect, he decides to include in his biographical project one or two disreputable pairs of *Lives*, believing that these negative paradigms will make the reader even more eager to observe and imitate the nobler ones (*Demetr.* 1.6).

The *Pericles* proem is, *inter alia*, instructive of the dominant role of reason in Greek thought. To rush instinctively into imitating a good deed is of little value, because the motivation is fleeting and dubious. Only actions thought out well may claim ethical approval, because only such actions are based on reason and therefore motivated by firm and unfaltering moral criteria. This is why Plutarch says (*Per.* 1.4) that observing noble deeds stimulates and nourishes our intellect (whereas other spectacles simply please our senses); for it is the intellect, the reason, that will give the observer of a noble action the criteria by which he may appreciate it and thus be urged to imitate it. (*Per.* 2.4). So also Martin (2011) 136–138. However, Duff (1999a) 37–41 understands this passage somewhat differently and finds (p. 38) a contradiction between *Per.* 2.2 (deeds of virtue instill in the observer an eagerness for imitation) and 2.4 (deeds of virtue mold the character of the observer [*éthopoiousi*] not through the imitation of the deed, but through furnishing him with a moral principle or choice [*proairesis*] by means of the examination of the deed). I see no contradiction: noble actions do produce an eagerness for imitation, but what molds and improves the character of the observer are the moral criteria he acquires, namely a determining *proairesis*, through the examination of these actions; and it is these moral criteria that will impel him to imitate them. In other words, this passage does not contrast the investigation of the deed with its imitation; it only qualifies the nature of the imitation which, before it takes effect, must first secure the approval of reason and thus emanate from and rely on a moral choice. Cf. also *Tim.* 6. On Pericles' proem and the nature of mimetical behavior see further Van der Stockt (1992) 32–37 and (2005) 139, 142ff. Finally, it is worth noting here that at *Cat. Min.* 9.10 Plutarch adds one more parameter for the successful imitation of a noble character and his deeds: to respect and feel warmly toward him. Otherwise, those who praise good men *aneu tou philein*, they may revere their reputation, but neither admire their virtue nor imitate it. Cf. also *ibid.* 44.13.

These programmatic statements, however, have been regarded as somewhat misleading (e.g. Duff (1999a) 70 and 55; cf. also Rosenmeyer (1992) 228–229) on two counts: (1) because Plutarch does not clarify what he means exactly by imitation in an epoch where it was impossible for the Greeks to imitate the exploits of their ancestors (Duff (1999a) 66–68), and (2) because the division of his biographies into good and bad heroes (as *Aem.* 1.1, 5 and *Demetr.* 1.5 particularly imply) is not brought out by the subsequent narrative. On the contrary, the narrative demonstrates, as is argued, that Plutarch's protagonists, far from being wholly good or bad, are either excellent men, but

not morally impeccable, or more or less reprehensible characters, but not without some noble traits (Duff (1999a) 55, 56f., 64–65). Since both these objections directly bear on the nature of Plutarch's moralism, we have to examine them more closely.

It appears that we sometimes tend to forget the beginning of the *Aemilius–Timoleon* proem, where Plutarch clearly states that the idea of his *Parallel Lives* was first suggested to him by others, most probably by the dedicatee Senecio and other Roman friends.²⁵ This means that his readership was, to some extent, the contemporary Roman elite, and these Romans at least could fully imitate, if they so wished, the *exempla* set by the subjects of the *Parallel Lives*, Greek and Roman alike.²⁶ As regards the Greek readers – certainly his main audience (cf. Duff (2007/2008) 7–11 and n. 24) – the recommended imitation was, indeed, not unqualified, but whatever it lost in range it gained in depth, as the prologue to *Pericles–Fabius* manifests. Surely, the Greek readers were not urged to imitate their exemplary forefathers by revolting against Rome (Plutarch's *Political Precepts* leave not a suspicion of doubt on this; see esp. 814C–F, 824C–E), but nothing prevented them from considering and evaluating how their noble (or less noble) ancestors thought, behaved, and acted in various circumstances. After all, the same *Political Precepts*, which so bluntly demarcates the limits of Greek political activity in Plutarch's times, abounds in references to commendable and censurable thoughts, decisions, conduct, and actions of their ancestors, which were still there for them to imitate or eschew.²⁷ Nothing hindered his Greek audience, for instance, from pondering on what Solon had said to Croesus and possibly adopting his views about happiness; or on how the triumphant Aemilius bore the successive deaths of his two young sons (*Aem.* 35–36). Nothing would check their admiration for Aristides' uprightness, unselfishness, cooperativeness, and genuine patriotism; and nothing would prevent them, of course, from imitating these qualities, whether in their private dealings or in carrying out their duties and exercising whatever power they might have as local magistrates.

The Greek readers, then, were first and foremost encouraged to focus on and try to imitate or avoid the examples by which they could fortify their moral character and thus ameliorate their lives; happiness, after all, rests with a life of virtue, as we saw above (p. 350). Contemplating, for instance, the affability and reconciling tactics of Cimon or Flaminius, Pericles' firmness of purpose, forbearance, and endurance of political pressures, Phocion's moral integrity, Alexander's chastity, and again Nicias' dilatoriness and superstition, Coriolanus' overweening pride and anger, Dion's self-will and haughtiness, or Alcibiades' deviousness and treachery, why couldn't the Greek local magistrates (or anyone else) strive at no peril to emulate the former and avoid the misdeeds and failings of the latter? It is in this sense that the sons of Plutarch's friend Polycrates (a remote descendant and compatriot of Aratus) are encouraged to imitate their exemplary ancestor; they are not expected to take up arms and attempt to restore the Achaean League (*Arat.* 1.5).

As for the second objection, it would certainly be justified, if Plutarch had indeed classified his protagonists in two categories; one with *wholly* good and another with *wholly* bad ones.²⁸ In fact, however, Plutarch strenuously avoids making this absolute distinction. On the contrary, despite his belief that man is intrinsically good (vice being something unnatural; cf. *Pomp.* 28.5, *Comp. Nic.–Crass.* 1.4, and *De sera* 551D) and nature is of itself prone to lead men toward goodness (cf. *De Alex. fort.* 333B), Plutarch holds that absolute virtue is unattainable, and one of his often repeated convictions is that human nature is weak, and therefore no man can become totally virtuous. So it

may not be accidental at all that this opinion is expressed at such an early stage of his biographical project as in the prologue to *Cimon–Lucullus*.²⁹

In addition to this, Plutarch's conviction about the frailty of human nature and the unattainability of moral perfection is further confirmed by the *synkriseis* which conclude most pairs. Even a cursory look into them will make manifest that Plutarch endeavors to maintain some kind of equilibrium between his subjects, ascribing virtues and flaws and allotting praise and blame to both of them.³⁰ Of all the heroes of the *Parallel Lives* Lycurgus and Numa emerge almost impeccable from the narrative. In the *synkrisis*, however, we find remarks that somehow undercut this "perfection." At 1.10, for instance, the *krypteia* is emphatically described as a most savage (*ômotaton*) and lawless (*paranomôtaton*) practice, whereas in the narrative the tone of the same description seems to be more reserved and detached;³¹ at 2.5 and 8–9 Plutarch is rather critical of Numa's political and social organization of the city, whereas the respective measures in the narrative are accompanied by favorable comments (cf. *Num.* 16.4 and 17.1–3); of Numa's educational laws Plutarch is even more critical (but only in the *synkrisis*; cf. 4.4–7). As to the rearing of girls and marriage legislation, Plutarch seems to be less happy with Lycurgus in the *synkrisis* (contrast 3.9–13 with *Lyc.* 14–15). Another almost impeccable pair is *Aemilius–Timoleon* (and a third one could be *Agis* and *Tiberius Gracchus*). Especially *Aemilius* is, if I am not mistaken, the only absolutely flawless *Life* in Plutarch (with *Publicola* a very close second). Nevertheless, in the proem to this pair Plutarch indirectly implies that most of the achievements to be recounted may have been due to his subjects' extraordinary good fortune rather than to their wisdom (cf. *Aem.* 1.6; *Tim.* 16.1, 19, 21.5–7, 36.5; *De fort. Rom.* 318B). Aristides also emerges almost blameless from the narrative of the pertinent *Life*; but some remarks in the *synkrisis* might again be taken to detract a bit from his "perfect" virtue (cf. 1.2, 4; 2.1–2, 4; 3.2, 4–5).

It follows, then, that Plutarch never meant his *Lives* to be paragons of absolute virtue or emblems of absolute vice. His heroes are taken from real life, and therefore are not black or white personalities but display a mixture of qualities, good and bad.³² As Rosenmeyer (1992) 226 n. 38 notes, "Human paragons in history are not unflawed paragons," and as perfect virtue is unattainable, so absolute vice does not practically exist. In his essay *On Brotherly Love* Plutarch remarks that even the lowest creatures may have some grace or natural aptitude for something good (485A); and in *Demetrius–Antony*, his negatively paradigmatic pair, Plutarch is not at all blind to the good aspects and some nice character traits of his protagonists.³³

But all this does not mean that "it is certainly impossible ... to divide the *Lives* into positive and deterrent examples, paradigms for imitation or avoidance" (Duff (2007/2008) 12), unless we are ready to dispute Plutarch's sincerity and confessed intentions. In fact, most of Plutarch's heroes are basically noble and virtuous, albeit not completely faultless, and are presented as examples for imitation *par excellence* (e.g. Aristides, Cimon, Lycurgus, Pelopidas, Pericles, Phocion, Timoleon/Aemilius, Brutus, Camillus, Cato the Younger, Numa, Publicola). Others may have several shortcomings and be morally inferior in some respects, but their virtues clearly exceed and outweigh their flaws; so they are also worthy of imitation to a great extent (e.g. Agesilaus, Alexander, Cleomenes, Themistocles/Cato the Elder, Caesar, Flamininus, Marcellus, Pompey, Romulus). Finally, a few of them are, to Plutarch's mind, mostly reprehensible, albeit not completely devoid of certain good qualities, and these, irrespective of

their problematic morality, are indeed presented as negative and deterrent examples, as modes of life from which we ought to keep away (e.g. Alcibiades, Demetrius, Nicias/ Antony, Coriolanus, Crassus, Sulla).³⁴

Some of the *Lives* of the figures above are indeed problematic in that they bring into prominence difficult moral dilemmas that are unsolved to the present day; the conflict, for instance, between private morality and public interest (see Duff (2007/2008) 12–13) – the conflict, in other words, between *honestum* and *utile*. This is why these *Lives* are particularly interesting and thought-provoking, of course, but to say (Duff (2007/2008) 13) that *Alcibiades* does not admit of a moralistic reading and that Alcibiades cannot be placed on a moral scale is an overstatement. Similarly, Verdegem (2010) 416–423, esp. 420 s.f.: “Plutarch does not make it clear to which side [sc. positive or negative] the scales tilted.” To my mind, however, Plutarch makes Alcibiades’ dishonesty, deceitfulness, and contempt of all moral rules and principles abundantly clear (cf. *Alc.* 2.1–3, 7.3, 8.1, 12.3, 14, 16.1–2, 5, 22.1, 23.1–2, 24.1, 40.3, 41.1–2, 42.1, 43.2); see also Russell (1972) 129. Nor does Plutarch want to baffle or puzzle his readers by showing that a vicious man like Sulla can be successful notwithstanding (so, rightly, Stadter (2003/2004) 92), for this would undermine his ethical program; and so would – *pace* Pelling (1996) xlii–xliv, lvi–lvii and Duff (1999a) 229–240 – any attempt to present Alcibiades as morally ambiguous. For Plutarch virtue is linked only with the *honestum*. So, even in these problematic *Lives* his priority is, I believe, again ethical, and what he primarily intends to show is the magnitude of the moral failings and the disasters and misery that such faulty characters may incur for both themselves and others.

In view of such a rich gallery of *exempla*, Plutarch’s readers are invited – to put it briefly – to emulate whatever in them is good and avoid whatever is bad. In view of the *Life of Sulla*, for instance, Plutarch expects his sensible readers, as Stadter ((2003/2004) 94a) points out, to judge and select: to avoid his viciousness and debauchery and imitate his patriotic loyalty and military successes (cf. also (2003/2004) 95b and (2000) 501).³⁵

The prologue to *Aemilius–Timoleon* leaves no doubt about this selective process. Plutarch says that he will endeavor to fashion his life according to the virtues of his heroes; he does not say that he will try to imitate his heroes outright in all respects; nor that they are all perfect models of virtue. And a couple of lines below he says even more unequivocally that, in examining carefully his heroes’ careers, he *selects* from their deeds what is more important and more beautiful to know (*Aem.* 1.2; cf. Gossage (1967) 73–74 and n. 26); for this is how moral improvement can efficaciously be brought about (*Aem.* 1.3). As the prologue to *Pericles–Fabius* instructs that conformity with someone’s virtues is not blind or thoughtless imitation, but emulation on the basis of moral principles ratified by reason (see above), so the prologue to *Aemilius–Timoleon* demonstrates that both conformity and imitation are selective.

3. The Nature of Plutarch’s Moralism

In his investigation of the nature of Plutarch’s moralism in the *Lives*, Christopher Pelling (1988a) 15–16 (and more extensively in (1995) = (2002) 237–251) has made a useful distinction between expository or protreptic and exploratory or descriptive moralism, “with ‘protreptic’ seeking to guide conduct, ‘descriptive’ being more concerned to point

truths about human behavior and shared human experience.” Further, by rightly laying stress on the fact that Plutarch “prefers the more timeless to the more particular, and favours historical explanations that transcend the particular period he is describing” ((2002) 239ff., esp. 242–243 and 246; cf. also Wardman (1974) 100–104), Pelling concludes that Plutarch’s moralism tends to be descriptive rather than protreptic, though he also admits that the two kinds go closely together and often “feed off one another” (248–249).³⁶

Duff (1999a) 54 argues on similar lines but, as he points out (n. 10), the protreptic/descriptive distinction is good only in the *Lives* proper, not in the *synkriseis* where the moralizing is explicit (sometimes even crude, according to Pelling (2002) 353). But how can we separate the latter from the former, if the *synkriseis* “are designed to make the reader ask new and rather challenging moral questions” (Duff (1999a) 243; cf. also 247 [“*synkrisis* as a means not of grading but of understanding”] and 286)? In my view, the *synkriseis* are not only “integral to the pair of *Lives* they follow” (Wardman (1974) 235), “not mere appendices to the *Lives*, but vital to understanding their moral purpose” (Jones (1982), 969b), but together with the proems and some digressions in the narrative are the parts of the *Lives* where a more authentic Plutarch is revealed; the parts where we can be almost sure that Plutarch speaks for himself and not through his sources (cf. also Nikolaidis (forthcoming)).

Pelling’s discussion is very illuminating but, to a great extent, he treats moral guidance on a par with political guidance, which, in Plutarch’s time, is something different, I think. Take, for instance, *Pomp.* 23.5–6 (Pelling (2002) 241), where Plutarch shrewdly remarks that military men who have become great and illustrious in war are not suited for democratic equality, and take it badly should they not be as important and prominent also in peacetime; and those who have achieved less distinction in the field find it intolerable not to have any advantage at least in the city. The populace, Plutarch continues, know how these soldiers feel and sense their yearning for primacy; so when they find such a man active in the forum, they try to depress and humiliate him; whereas the one who renounces his war glories and does not claim political offices escapes the people’s envy and retains his military reputation and power. All this is psychologically extremely insightful on the part of Plutarch, but to explain the psychology of the soldier as well as that of the populace and thus warn the prospective politician of how he should behave and act, and what he has to avoid, is purely political guidance; by following it, one may be politically successful, but one does not, for this reason, become a better man, which is the purpose of moral guidance. And it is only in this political-psychological context that the *Pompey* passage is an example of descriptive moralism.

True, the Platonic *Republic* is both ethics and politics, and Aristotle’s introductory paragraphs to the *Nicomachean Ethics* regard ethics as the first part of a unified political science (*Eth. Nic.* 1094a18–1094b11; see conveniently Rackham’s introductions in Loeb *Nicomachean Ethics*, p. XVI f. or *Politics*, p. XIII f.). But is this scheme, a fruit of the Greek *polis*, still alive in Plutarch’s day where the Greek city-state has been dead for four centuries and Greece itself reduced to a Roman province for more than two? Confronted with the new realities, the Hellenistic philosophers gradually dissociate the interests of the individual from those of his city and primarily focus on the former. What matters now is the individual’s self-fulfillment and happiness, which breaks away from the welfare of the city and becomes an end in itself. Pericles’ noble democratic reminders about the precedence of the *polis* and the public good over the good of the individual citizen (Thuc. 2.60.2–4), though adopted by Aristotle one century later (*Eth. Nic.* 1094b7–10;

Pol. 1253a25), sound increasingly meaningless in the following centuries. In his political treatises Plutarch may indeed have tried to reunite somehow politics with ethics, but in doing so “he is parting company with the instinctive attitudes of many of his fellows in the politically active class of his day” (so Trapp (2004) 198; cf. also p. 195). It follows, then, that political and moral guidance are no longer identical and certainly do not always coincide.

Pelling’s remarks on *Philopoemen–Flaminius*, which he discusses in connection with the *Political Precepts*, are similar.³⁷ This pair illustrates the closely related concepts of ambition (*philotimia*) and contentiousness (*philonikia*), but Pelling’s observations, perspicacious though they are, appear to examine the pertinent qualities almost exclusively in the context of their political significance (see (2002) 243f., and esp. 245–246) and not as moral failings of Philopoemen and Flaminius. Yet *pure* descriptive or implicit moralism we do find in almost all cases where Plutarch narrates, reflects, and even comments, but without making direct ethical characterizations. See, for instance, his reasoning for the superiority of virtue *vis-à-vis* incorruptibility and power (*Arist.* 6.3–5); the discourse on wealth and its exhibition at *Cat. Mai.* 18.4–5 or that on fortune at *Aem.* 36; the “prehistory” and development of bribery (*Cor.* 14); the psychology of anger (*Cor.* 15.5; cf. also *Comp. Cor.-Alc.* 5.5) and the origin of unnatural and cruel desires at *Pel.* 21.6; the Pyrrhus–Cineas dialogue on the wisdom of the Italian expedition (*Pyr.* 14) or that between Brutus and Cassius on committing suicide (*Brut.* 40.6–9); the comparative assessment of Romulus’ and Numa’s achievements (*Comp. Lyc.-Num.* 4); the reflections on Aristides’ poverty (*Arist.* 25.3–8 and *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3.2–4) or on Thales’ arguments against having children of his own (*Sol.* 7). Especially Plutarch’s digressions offer many examples of descriptive moralism, which is indeed more frequent than the protreptic kind.³⁸

4. Moralism Through Characterization

Plutarch’s moralism in the *Lives* is constructed in various ways. We have already discussed some of his prologues that particularly signal the moral purpose of the biographies, but in fact most of his proems bear witness to his moral approaches and preoccupations (see, e.g., *Phoc.-Cat. Min.*, *Dion-Brut.*, *Pel.-Marc.*, *Demetr.-Ant.*, *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi*, *Cor.-Alc.*); and even more so do his *synkriseis*, where Plutarch attempts an overall assessment of the achievements of his heroes and a final evaluation of their characters (see above). Many of his digressions are also of considerable ethical significance,³⁹ but the most usual expression of Plutarch’s moralism in the *Lives* is undoubtedly through his various characterizations. Sometimes he first describes directly a person as such or such (e.g., X was ambitious or arrogant or upright or kind-hearted etc.) and then gives examples to substantiate the attribute,⁴⁰ and other times he depicts a hero through the moral qualities (good or bad) of his character⁴¹ or through a direct (and sometimes indirect) characterization of his conduct or actions.⁴² Such forms of characterization have an immediate moral impact, because, as Pelling ((2002) 249) rightly notes, “the characterization of others can crystallize ideas of what a well-lived life could be.” Accordingly, such forms of characterization exemplify the protreptic (or explicit) kind of moralism, which is thus proved (*pace* Duff (1999a) 54; cf. n. 38 above) to be in operation quite extensively. Occasionally, however, the characterization of a certain deed is not attributed to the doer. For example, when Plutarch describes the notorious *krypteia* as a most

savage and lawless practice (*Comp. Lyc. - Num.* 1.10: *ômotaton ergon kai paranomôtaton*), savageness and lawlessness do not characterize Lycurgus, who supposedly established this practice; for Lycurgus was an exceptionally upright man, since he had preferred righteousness to being a king (cf. *Lyc.* 3.3–6 and 28.1). It seems that in such cases Plutarch tends to see the bad action or the evil committed as a manifestation of the doer's imperfect virtue rather than as a token of innate baseness (see *Cim.* 2.5 and cf. *Sert.* 18.11; cf. also Wardman (1974) 174); or he openly dissociates the doer from the deed on the basis of his already fixed opinion about him (cf. also Jones (1982) 977a). Thus, he rejects Idomeneus' information that Pericles contrived the murder of Ephialtes out of envy of his reputation; Pericles, he admits, was not at all impeccable, but his noble spirit (of which Plutarch was certain) could not have accommodated such a savage and bestial deed (*Per.* 10.7–8; for a similar apology cf. also *Pomp.* 49.14).

Another method of characterization is by means of comparison or contrast with other figures (cf. Bucher-Isler (1972) 62ff. and Pelling ((1988b) 268–274 = (2002) 292–297). In most of these cases the hero or his acts have already been described by Plutarch as such or such, but the comparative contrast with others illustrates and highlights his characterizations. At *Arist.* 23.2, for example, Aristides' justice and Cimon's mildness toward the other Greeks are better understood when contrasted with Pausanias' rapacity and arrogance; and so, on the whole, is Themistocles' character through his contrast with Aristides (*Them.* 3.3 and *Arist.* 2.2), Aratus through his contrast with Cleomenes (*Arat.* 36.4–5), and Brutus through his contrast with Cassius (*Brut.* 1.4; cf. also 29.1–7). At *Lys.* 6.2 it is Callicratidas who exposes Lysander's empty boast, and at *Fab.* 22.8 it is Fabius' conduct that brings into prominence Marcellus' kindness and humanity (but earlier at *Fab.* 5.5–8, 8, 10 Fabius' prudence is revealed through Minucius' rashness). Finally, Artaxerxes' reputation of a gentle king who loved his subjects was gained through his contrast with the cruelty and bloodthirstiness of his son Ôchos (*Art.* 30.9).⁴³

Other times Plutarch refrains from directly characterizing persons or actions as such or such, but he does so indirectly by allotting some general praise or blame or by presenting others, usually anonymous people (*legetai, elegon, phasi* etc.), to comment on them. This is "characterization by reaction," as Pelling (1988a) 40 has named it. At *Ant.* 9.5–9, for instance, Plutarch lingers on Antony's outrages in Rome but, instead of characterizing that conduct himself, he tells us how the good and sensible citizens loathed Antony on account of his dissolute manners;⁴⁴ the Iberians admiring the manners and policies of Sertorius is another example of this method of characterization (*Sert.* 14). At other times, however, Plutarch does the same thing even more indirectly by describing a certain behavior or action in such a way that his readers may easily decide for themselves if the person or action concerned is to be praised or blamed. Good examples of this indirect descriptive technique, as it were, are *Ant.* 20 (episodes from the proscriptions of the second triumvirate), *Cleom.* 11 (the social reforms), *Brut.* 50.7–9 (Antony's treatment of Brutus' comrade Lucilius), *Demetr.* 24.8–12 (the Athenians' demeanor toward Demetrius); consider also *Cat. Mai.* 17.2–5 (repeated at *Flam.* 18.3–10).

But there are also cases where Plutarch describes a conduct or action and he is himself uncertain whether it is commendable or reproachable. At *Publ.* 6.5, for example, Junius Brutus has his two sons (who had conspired with the Tarquins against their father) decapitated before his very eyes, a deed that Plutarch declares himself unable to either praise or blame; for Brutus' phenomenal apathy must be ascribed either to the loftiness

of his virtue or to the magnitude of his suffering, of which neither is peculiar to a human being. Yet our weakness to decide, Plutarch continues, should not lead us to question Brutus' virtue, given his high reputation amongst the Romans. Earlier at *Publ.* 3.5 Plutarch seems to approve of Brutus' inexorability, because it applied to criminals, but at *Brut.* 1.1 the same man is presented as naturally cruel (*sklēron ek physeôs ... to êthos*), because reason had not managed to soften his character adequately.⁴⁵ Consider also Plutarch's reflections on the warlike and peaceful policies of Romulus and Numa (*Comp. Lyc.-Num.* 4.13), or those on Aristides' chosen poverty (cf. *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3–4). It is cases like these, I believe, that most eloquently represent and exemplify what Pelling discerns as descriptive or exploratory moralism.

Sometimes, however, Plutarch's difficulty in approving or disapproving is somewhat assumed. At *Cat. Mai.* 5.7, for example, he leaves it open whether Cato's practice of selling his slaves when they grew old (4.5), and his boast that he left in Spain the horse he had been using all along so that he might not burden the city with the cost of its transportation, should be regarded as signs of greatness (*megaloψychia*) or pettiness (*mikrologia*). Yet ch. 5 as a whole clearly manifests Plutarch's disapproval.

Finally, another indirect but distinct way of characterization is by means of anecdotes. Here Plutarch narrates a story featuring his hero, usually without judgments or comments. Yet the story itself eloquently characterizes the hero and his conduct or deeds (cf. the "speaking description" technique above); and not infrequently Plutarch elaborates an anecdote, as Beck (forthcoming) rightly observes, in the direction of psychological depth, as regards the character of his subjects. Beck mainly argues on the basis of the anecdotes in *Caesar*, but his conclusions hold good also in other *Lives*. See, for instance, the anecdotes at *Luc.* 41, which illustrate the psychology of the *bon viveur* Lucullus, who uses his wealth so differently than Crassus (see *Crass.* 23) or Nicias (*Nic.* 3–4). Again, how revealing is *Pyrrh.* 20 for the personalities of Pyrrhus and Fabricius! The former, after failing to bribe the latter, attempts to scare him in a childish manner with the trunk of an elephant, but at least appreciates his loftiness of spirit and is not angered at his retort that, if Pyrrhus' subjects became acquainted with him, they would prefer to have Fabricius rather than Pyrrhus as their king. And how apocalyptic of Sulla's character is his public announcement that he was proscribing as many as he could remember, and those whom he now happened to forget, he would proscribe at a future time (*Sull.* 31.6)! The Megabates' anecdote (*Ages.* 11.7) betrays Agesilaus' sexual inhibitions (even if it does not demonstrate his temperance, as Beck (1999) 183f. holds), and numerous anecdotes manifest the wit, wisdom, moral integrity, and political astuteness of Phocion and, to some extent, also of the elder Cato (cf. *Cat. Mai.* 8–9 and 12.6–7: his curt and concise speech reflects his abstemious and pragmatic character) and of Themistocles (cf. *Them.* 5.3–7, 10.1–3, 11.3–6, 18). Alcibiades' character is also depicted in anecdotes (cf. *Alc.* 2, 4.5–6, 5), and the examples could be multiplied.⁴⁶

5. Moralism and Individuality

In the prologues to *De mulierum virtutes* and *Phocion–Cato Minor* Plutarch affirms that virtues are not uniform but liable to nuances and differentiations, according to the given political and social milieu (*Phoc.* 3.3–4) or – and mainly so – according to the nature of

the person to whom they relate. The bravery of Alcibiades, for example, is different from the bravery of Epaminondas, and so is Themistocles' wisdom (*phronēsis*) from that of Aristides, or Numa's justice from that of Agesilaus (*Phoc.* 3.7). Similarly, in the prologue to *Mulierum virtutes*, Plutarch tells us that Achilles was brave in one way and Ajax in another, Odysseus' wisdom differed from that of Nestor, and the justice of the younger Cato was also different from that of Agesilaus. These observations are, in my opinion, the best answer to those who deny the individuality of the Plutarchan heroes, believing that they are simply exponents of character traits or typical ethical qualities (cf. Bucher-Isler (1972) 60–61, 79; and, perhaps, Gill (1983) 470ff.). In fact, the above proems postulate that no hero of Plutarch is the same as another, much though they may have similar virtues and vices. It follows, then, that his heroes are not emblematic of one or another quality on the whole, but only of aspects of this quality. As Jones (1982) 977a has put it, Plutarch “believed strongly in the immutability of virtues, and character is essential for him in explaining their different manifestations.” And if Plutarch himself believes that a moral quality is expressed and manifests itself in different ways, and treats only Phocion and the younger Cato as an exception to this rule (for their virtues were almost identical; cf. *Phoc.* 3.8–9), we perhaps scarcely need to look elsewhere for arguments confirming the individuality of his protagonists.

As a matter of fact, this individuality is present even in heroes who are fairly predictable and are regarded as particularly moralistic and emblematic of concrete ethical qualities. Plutarch may indeed integrate the various elements of character (Pelling (1988b) 264ff. = (2002) 288ff.), but this integration does not necessarily make the hero predictable and/or without true individuality. In what sense, for instance, does Timoleon's childhood prefigure his later career? What comment or remark in the early chapters of *Brutus* could be taken to suggest or make the reader suspect and predict how this hero would perish? Nor is individuality necessarily linked with inner contradictions and complexes. I cannot elaborate this point in detail here, but, setting aside the *Lives*, which most critics agree were composed from a “personality viewpoint” (see below), I will say a few words about some of the predictable and character-centered ones. The hero who exemplifies justice *par excellence* is, no doubt, Aristides. However, in the proems above Plutarch mentions Numa, Agesilaus, and the younger Cato as representatives of justice. Why? Because Aristides, according to Plutarch, represented yet another form of justice, an extreme and almost abnormal one, a kind of justice that led him – whereas, by implication, it should not have – to disregard completely the interests of himself and his family (cf. *Arist.* 25.3–7 and *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3.2–4);⁴⁷ yet it is this kind of justice that individuates, singles out, and stamps Aristides' personality.

The younger Cato is another predictable figure, insofar as his adherence to Stoicism and his inflexible manners might be taken to presage his suicide after Caesar's prevalence.⁴⁸ But his relationships with women (especially his remarriage with Marcia whom he had divorced) are unique for a prominent and esteemed public man. Plutarch will delay on Cato's womenfolk (*Cat. Min.* 24–25; cf. also 52.5–8), because, to depict Cato's soul (24.1), he also needs these slight tokens that illuminate not only his character but mainly his personality at large. Brutus resembles Cato in many respects, but he follows the Academy and not the Stoa. He criticizes Cato's suicide (*Brut.* 40.7), but commits suicide himself all the same. *Cato Minor* and *Brutus* are indeed moralistic *Lives*, their subjects are driven by their principles, but their moral fixations vary. We can hardly imagine Cato (despite *Cat. Min.* 3.5–6)

conspiring to assassinate Caesar. Notwithstanding their common features, Cato and Brutus are different personalities and this clearly individuates them.

Similar signs of individuality and personality rather than character we find in almost all Plutarch's heroes. Most critics now recognize that such *Lives* as, primarily, *Alcibiades*, *Antony*, *Lysander*, and *Sulla* portray complex personalities rather than simple ethical characters. Doubtless, Plutarch does refer to the character traits of these men, but he also attempts to disclose the psychological motivation behind their conduct and deeds, to show their divergence from the norm, to reveal, in other words, their personality and singularity.⁴⁹ Of the vicious and ruthless Sulla, for example, we hear that he was easily moved to laughter and tears of pity (*Sull.* 30.6); what else, if not Sulla's individuality, does this combination manifest? But apart from the *Lives* above, should we characterize it as "der Norm" (Bucher-Isler (1972) 61) or "das Typische" (p. 79) when we are informed that Pericles would kiss Aspasia daily on departing from and returning to his house (*Per.* 24.9), or that he begged her off by shedding copious tears at her trial (32.5), or that he would give his prodigal son Xanthippus a meager allowance (36.2)? Do not all these details manifest Pericles' individuality and personality rather than character? Does the end of Themistocles tie in with the picture of a most ambitious man and arriviste, to some extent, that emerges from the account of his career? By contrast, is not Alcibiades' end, despite the complexity, manysidedness, and distinct individuality of this hero, far more expected and predictable? Is not the way Lucullus used his wealth indicative of his personality (*Luc.* 41), and does it not differentiate him (thus individuating him) from Crassus or Nicias in this respect (see above)? Is not Pompey's refusal to hang his recovery on Lucullus' extravagance also suggestive of his personality and individuality (*Pomp.* 2.11–12/*Luc.* 40.2)? And when Plutarch tells us that Phocion's speech was exceptionally concise (*Phoc.* 5.4) and Pompey's graceful manners especially attractive to women (*Pomp.* 53.2), what does he reveal of Phocion and Pompey, their character or their personality? Or what does Cleomenes' fixation on his wife Agiatis indicate, for whom he, out of yearning for her, would abandon his army in the middle of a campaign (*Cleom.* 22.1)?

6. Conclusions

To sum up and conclude, Glover (1909) 89 is probably right in describing Plutarch as "an avowed moralist, didactic in every fibre." However, the preceding discussion has hopefully shown that Plutarch's moralism in the *Lives* is neither aggressive nor relentless, neither crude nor too rigorous. Plutarch believes that man is naturally inclined toward the good (p. 356 s.f.), and with his writings, which indeed aim at moral edification, attempts to help men live well in realizing their nature. Although he denounces vice and its manifestations, he is not the rigid puritanical moralist who, with the whip of moral law in his hands, sermonizes *ex cathedra* and terrorizes his audience with the threat of the predominance of evil. Nor does he ever set up unbending rules or entirely perfect – and therefore unreal – models of ethical behavior. Plutarch is convinced that absolute virtue is unattainable, sympathizes with the frailty of human nature, and, on the whole, is ready to understand his heroes' faults, regardless of his strictures – sometimes particularly harsh – upon them. Perhaps he does not get inside the skin of his protagonists in the way a modern biographer might, and often neglects or fails to explain conduct in a thoroughly

satisfactory way. But we will be unfair to Plutarch if we deny altogether his occasional efforts to step into his heroes' shoes. The *Sertorius–Eumenes Comparison*, for example, clearly suggests Plutarch's striving to understand and explain his heroes' behavior and actions (see also p. 354 above). Besides, what else do his reflections on a given course of action or on decisions his protagonists are about to make indicate? What else do his not infrequent attempts to exonerate a hero of a certain misdeed imply (cf. the cases of Lycurgus, Pericles, and Pompey above)? Plutarch often ponders on what his protagonist had or did not need to do, and occasionally states what he would himself do in certain situations or circumstances (see, for instance, *Cat. Mai.* 5.6).

Most of Plutarch's heroes are complex personalities and cannot be reduced to stock types, as the great variety of his characterizations also confirms. They are distinctly individuated, because ethical qualities themselves are not uniform. There are forms of ambition, arrogance, justice, bravery, passionate temper, demagoguery. Plutarch does focus on the moral character of his heroes and it is indeed their *êthos* that he primarily purports to bring into relief, but his descriptions, comments, and judgments explore the character from different angles, which thus illuminate the whole personality of the hero, bringing forth, at the same time, his singularity and individuality. The association of "character" with moral appraisal and that of "personality" with a unique individuality (Gill (1990) 3) can hardly be disputed, yet the approaches deriving from these associations are not of necessity mutually exclusive, but can, on the contrary, be combined perfectly. A virtuous or vicious character can be equally a unique individual, and nothing precludes, of course, a complex personality, however individualized and *sui generis*, from being admired for his/her honesty or despised for his/her meanness.

In the final analysis, the question whether Plutarch wrote his *Lives* from a character or a personality viewpoint creates a dilemma that narrows down and does injustice to our author's literary art. Plutarch did write his *Lives* from a character viewpoint, as he himself proclaims. But the methods and the compositional techniques he employed to reveal the character of his heroes were so varied that his biographical portraits in fact lay bare the whole personality of their subjects. The *Lives* are indeed character-centered, but thanks to Plutarch's authorial skills the hero's character is practically disclosed in the context and through the revelation of his whole personality.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. Klaerr (1989) 248, and Wilamowitz's view in n. 7 *ibid.* Perhaps the *Moralia* corpus owes its name to this very essay.
- 2 For the connection of happiness with *autarkeia* see *Mor.* 523D, 632E, and esp. 1052E and 1068B; cf. also *Lyc.* 31.1. On this issue see further Opsomer (2011) 152.
- 3 The careers of these men were not crowned with success in the end, but their moral excellence remained intact throughout (to some extent the same also holds good for Brutus; cf. *Brut.* 50.5). Further, see *De tranq. anim.* 475C–E; *C. Gracch.* 19.4; *Cleom.* 39.1; *Comp. Aem.–Tim.* 2.10; *Eum.* 9.12; *Fab.* 10.2; cf. also *Phoc.* 1.5–6 and *Per.* 38.2. Fortune with all its enticements cannot impede the salutary influence of philosophy either, as we see at *Alc.* 4.2. For the relationship of virtue with fortune and happiness see Opsomer's (2011) fine article.
- 4 There is evidence that Plutarch ran his own school (perhaps somewhat informal) at Chaeronea. Cf. *Conj. Praec.* 138C, and see Ziegler (1964) 26f. and Russell (1972) 13.

- 5 At *De tranq. anim.* 475C–F fortune is associated with the body (thus, it can only harm one’s material existence), whereas virtue is associated with the rational part of the *psychê* (thus, fortune cannot turn a brave man into a cowardly one). Cf. also *De Alex. fort.* 336B.
- 6 See also *De tranq. anim.* 467B–C and cf. *Comp. Aem.-Tim.* 2.10; *Eum.* 9.1; and *De Alex. fort.* 337C. At *Pomp.* 53.9–10 we again see that good fortune can hardly exercise any serious influence on human nature.
- 7 Thus, reason will also help us to get rid of our failings; to resist our overshyhness, for example (cf. *De vit. pud.* 529D, 532A, C, 533D), or to cease being inquisitive, prying into the affairs of others (cf. *De cur.* 521D–E). More on this in Nikolaidis (2011).
- 8 The *opinio dominans* is that Plutarch had a first-hand knowledge of Aristotle (cf. Ziegler (1964) 284; Erbse (1956) 400 n. 1; Babut (1996) 6ff. with more bibliography on pp. 2–3). *Contra* Sandbach (1982) esp. 208–209 and 230.
- 9 Cf. Erbse (1956) 400 n. 1; Russell (1972) 84; Dumortier (1975) 18. But other critics hold that *De virtute morali* draws on Plato and/or contemporary Academic and Peripatetic doctrines rather than on Aristotle. Cf. Ingenkamp (1999) 91–92; Duff (1999a) 72 (with n. 2 for more bibliography); but also Babut (1969) 2 and 54–80, who, moreover, regards this essay as an important attempt by Plutarch to blend Platonic/Academic and Aristotelian/Peripatetic views in an original composition.
- 10 See, for instance, *Mor.* 44A–B, 171E, 513A, 529A, 543D–F, 746C–747A etc.
- 11 Cf. also Erbse (1956) 400 n. 1; Bucher-Isler (1972) 61 and 91; Jones (1982) 970a; Dihle (1970) 58, 75–76.
- 12 Cf. Leo (1901) 192 and 316; Stuart (1928) 170; Dihle (1970) 57–87; Flacelière (1957) xxviii; Gossage (1967) 47; Scardigli (1995) 7–12. However, Momigliano (1993) 23–64, 101–104 would trace the origin of Greek biography much earlier than Aristotle (which might be true, if the evidence provided is regarded as precursory biographical attempts) and, on second thought (ibid. 106, 113–115, 120), would deny the Aristotelian influence even on the biography of the Peripatetics (which carries little conviction).
- 13 For when human nature is governed by passion, it becomes blind and deranged (*Pomp.* 70.2), and in this case men become more savage than beasts, especially if they happen to wield power when they indulge their passions; cf., e.g., *Cic.* 46.6 and *Mar.* 2.1. For the upsetting force of passions cf. Pl. *Leg.* 863B (*thymos ... alogistôi biaî polla anatrepei*); cf. also *Def.* 415E.
- 14 Cf. *Cor.* 1.4–5; *Mar.* 2.2–4; *Dion* 9.1; *Comp. Lyc.-Num.* 4.10–12; *Them.* 2.7. At *Ti. Gracch.* 1.7 Plutarch tells us that, though the Gracchi were admittedly more gifted by nature than any other Roman, they were thought to owe their excellence to education rather than to nature.
- 15 On the rashness of Pelopidas and Marcellus see Ingenkamp (2008). And for other, similarly irreversible, consequences of uncontrolled anger cf. *Alex.* 51 and *Comp. Thes.-Rom.* 3.1.
- 16 For the Hellenic education of Plutarch’s Roman heroes see Pelling (1989) and Swain (1990).
- 17 Plutarch glorifies the importance of education, esp. the philosophical one, in all his pedagogical treatises (cf. [7C–8B], 15F, 47A–48D), but see also his tracts *On Moral Progress* (where progress in virtue is linked with progress in philosophy) and *On Whether Virtue is Teachable*. Aratus, however, is found to be deficient in philosophical education (see *Arat.* 10.5 and cf. Pelling ((1988b) 265f. = (2002) 289f.). Cf. also Bucher-Isler (1972) 49, 67–68 and nn. ibid.
- 18 Cf. Gossage (1967) 65–66. But Gossage does not reduce Plutarch’s heroes to stock types (see p. 66), as Bucher-Isler (1972) 60–61 does. Ingenkamp (1992) 4625 n. 5 rightly criticizes the latter’s book (cf. also Duff (1999a) 54; and Beck (forthcoming)), but unfairly regards Wardman as sympathetic to her views (ibid.).
- 19 Further, as Dihle (1970) 76ff. rightly observes, ancient and modern ideas of what constitutes the personality do not coincide; hence also the difference between ancient and modern descriptions of character.

- 20 Cf. Pelling (1990a) 261. Note that, according to Wilamowitz, the Greek authors as a whole were inclined to praise or blame people instead of trying to understand them, a view that Pelling (1990a) 245ff. rightly combats.
- 21 For a thorough and perceptive discussion of these programmatic statements see Duff (1999a) 13–49.
- 22 Cf. also *Cat. Min.* 24.1 and 37.10, *Cat. Mai.* 7.3; *Pomp.* 8.7; *Dem.* 11.7; *Them.* 18; *Comp. Dem.-Cic.* 1.4–6; *Reg. apophth.* 172C.
- 23 In the essay, however, the praise and admiration of a good deed does not automatically incite the admirer to do the same; all Athenians praised Miltiades' daring at Marathon, but only Themistocles set his mind on imitating him (*De prof. in. virt.* 84B–C). Cf. also Pérez Jiménez (2002) 106.
- 24 Cf. also *De prof. in. virt.* 85A–B, *Reg. apophth.* 172D and *De glor. Ath.* 345E–F. For Plutarch, then, “history ought to be a stimulus to conduct, and the great figures of the past were models on whom modern readers ought to pattern themselves.” So Jones (1982) 965b. On the mirror metaphor see Stadter (2003/2004) and cf. Stadter (2000) 504–505.
- 25 On this matter cf. Nikolaidis (2005) 297 and n. 48.
- 26 See also Stadter (2002) and cf. Stadter (2000) 494–499; *contra* Duff (2007/2008) 4–13, who focuses especially on the response expected of Plutarch's primarily Greek readers (pp. 7–11).
- 27 Cf. 800B–D, 802B–D, 803A–B, E–F, 805C, E–F, 806F–807B, 808A–B, 809A–B, 810D, 811B, 813D–E.
- 28 So Duff (1999a) 55. To be precise, Duff denies (and rightly so) that Plutarch's *Lives* can be so classified, but he seems to believe that *Demetr.* 1.5 and other programmatic statements (see p. 56) allow this unwarranted conclusion. In my view, they clearly do not. What Plutarch points out at *Demetr.* 1.5–6 is that moral lessons can also be drawn from the deterrent value of negative paradigms, namely, from observing also vice in action and examining its causes and its consequences.
- 29 Cf. *Cim.* 2.5 and see also *Cleom.* 16.8; *Dion* 2.5–6, 25B–C (= 474A), 26A, 439B, 481F, 545E, 964D–E. Cf. also [104]C. As for the early date of the *Cim.-Luc.* pair, see Jones (1966) 68 = (1995) 111 and Nikolaidis (2005) 286, 300 with n. 57, 318.
- 30 Cf. Jones (1982) 969a, and Nikolaidis (forthcoming). For a comprehensive discussion of Plutarch's *synkriseis* see now Duff (1999a) 243–286 (and p. 250 n. 25 for more bibliography).
- 31 However, at *Lyc.* 28.13 we are told that the *krypteia* was so abominable (*míaron*) that it cannot have been introduced by such a mild and upright character as Lycurgus.
- 32 See also Duff (1999a) 64; and as Stadter ((2003/2004) 90b) puts it, Plutarch's *Lives* “are not encomia, but re-creations of real people, who lived and acted on the stage of history, with all their faults and weaknesses.”
- 33 For the Greek see esp. *Demetr.* ch. 4, and for the Roman *Ant.* 17.3–5. Further, cf. *Demetr.* 2.3, 3.1, 6.4, 9.2, 17.1 and *Ant.* 3.10, 4.6–9, 6.5, 23.2 (cf. also *Brut.* 50.7–9). In essence, of course, all this goes back to the Platonic doctrine of “great natures,” able for the greatest good and the greatest evil, which Plutarch has apparently espoused. See Duff (1999b) and cf. Bucher-Isler (1972) 80–81.
- 34 For the division of *Lives* in three categories see Piccirilli (2001) xxx and Nikolaidis (2005) 314.
- 35 Sulla, regardless of his military/political talents, is not a basically good man with few or many weaknesses like, say, Lucullus. He is basically a bad man with bits of virtue like Demetrius or Antony. This is why I find difficult to accept that *Lysander–Sulla* is an early pair, belonging to the first stage of Plutarch's biographical project, which must have started with more or less indisputable models for imitation (cf. Nikolaidis (2005) 307f.).
- 36 This is crucial: the two forms of moralism are not always distinguishable, and often it is rather scholastic to attempt a distinction between, say: (a) The deed which X performed was most

- noble and just (protreptic), (b) The people were very pleased with the deed which X performed (descriptive), and (c) These were the results (salutary, beneficial, useful etc.) of the deed which X performed (descriptive). Duff (1999a) and (2007/2008) employs the terms “explicit/implicit,” but he regards as explicit moralism only the second-person injunctions ((2007/2008) 6b), which are extremely rare in the *Lives*. So, I would regard his examples (*Cic.* 6.1; *Alex.* 42.6–10 (2007/2008) 5b–6a), where Plutarch himself characterizes the conduct and actions of his protagonists, as cases of explicit moralism (see pp. 360–361 above).
- 37 His conclusion is that *Philopoemen* is not “a manual of contemporary statesmen, and anyone seeking more specific political advice would search in vain” ((2002) 245); and (p. 248): “*Philopoemen* gives little specific guidance for contemporary politics, but that does not mean that it has no protreptic force.” I agree, but I would see the protreptic force, albeit negatively, of this *Life* more in *Philopoemen*’s failings (anger and contentiouness), irrespective of his bravery, endurance, patriotic spirit, resourcefulness etc., and less in his military/political exploits. Plutarch himself, after all, closes his *synkrisis* by awarding *Philopoemen* the crown for military experience and generalship, but crediting him with not even one moral virtue. For the limitations of Greek political life in Plutarch’s day, see mainly his *Political Precepts* and the pertinent discussions of Jones (1971) 110–121; Carrière (1984) 33–65; Desideri (1986); and Swain (1996) 161–186.
- 38 Yet Duff’s (1999a) 54 statement that Plutarch’s moralism in the body of the *Lives* “is almost invariably implicit” goes, perhaps, too far (see pp. 360–361 above).
- 39 See, for instance, *Alex.* 64; *Ant.* 28, 70; *Cat. Mai.* 5.2–7 and 18.4–5; *Cor.* 14.2–5, 32.5–8, 38; *Dion* 21.7–9; *C. Gracch.* 19; *Cleom.* 38.5–12; *Marc.* 17.5–12; *Num.* 4, 14.7–12; *Pel.* 19, 21; *Per.* 6.2–5; *Pyrrh.* 14; *Sol.* 7; *Sull.* 30.5–6; *Tim.* 6. As far as I know, there is no comprehensive study on Plutarch’s digressions in the *Lives*.
- 40 Cf. *Ages.* 2.2–3 and 7.4–7; *Alex.* 39.1–6; *Alc.* 2.1–4; *Arist.* 7; *Demetr.* 4; *Eum.* 9.2–12; *Lys.* 5.7–6.7; *Them.* 3.4 and 18; *Cic.* 28.1–2; *Crass.* 3; *Fab.* 2.3; *Flam.* 21.1; *Sull.* 3.8 and 8.1; *Art.* 26.2; *Comp. Cor.-Alc.* 2.1; *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 2.4; *Comp. Sert.-Eum.* 2, etc. For the direct characterization of Cleomenes see Dihle (1970) 100.
- 41 Cf. *Arist.* 6 and 25.10; *Dion* 8.1–3; *Cleom.* 1.4–5; *Lys.* 7.1; *Per.* 39.1, 3; *Them.* 5; *Aem.* 28.10; *Fab.* 1.4–6; *Flam.* 20.1–3 and 21.2; *Mar.* 34.5–6; *Sull.* 13.2, etc.
- 42 Cf. *Ages.* 23.6–11; *Arist.* 2.6; *Demetr.* 11.2–5; *Dem.* 22; *Lys.* 2.4–6, 5.8, 7.5–6, 8; *Ant.* 19.4; *Sert.* 26.7; *Comp. Cor.-Alc.* 1.3–4; *Comp. Lys.-Num.* 4.15; *Comp. Lys.-Sull.* 3; *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 2.1–3, etc.
- 43 Cf. also *Ages.* 7.1–3; *Cim.* 5.1; *Caes.* 15.3–4; *Luc.* 4.1; *Sert.* 1.9–10, etc. With reference to *Artaxerxes*, Almagor (2009/2010) has recently pinpointed the characterization through animals.
- 44 Cf. also *Ant.* 21; and for more examples of this technique see Pelling’s index ((1988a) 335).
- 45 *Brut.* 1.1 does not necessarily mean that Plutarch had overcome his indecision by the time he came to write the *Brutus*. Rather, this inconsistency is due to the antithesis with Marcus Brutus whose character, unlike that of Junius Brutus, was imbued by reason and philosophical training (1.2: *paideiaiai kai logōi dia philosophias katamiksas to êthos*); cf. *Per.* 4–6, 8 and n. 17 above.
- 46 For anecdotes characterizing Antony see Pelling (1988a) 12 and n. 55 (cf. also *Brut.* 50.7–9); characterizing Alexander see Stadter (1996); characterizing Lycurgus and Agesilaus see Beck (1999); characterizing Cleomenes see Dihle (1970) 95ff. Cf. also *Alc.* 2 (and Duff (1999a) 230–237); *Arist.* 7.7–8; *Per.* 8.5 (Pericles’ power of persuasion) and 38.2 (Pericles’ “rationalism”); *Sol.* 5.5, 15.2, 29.7, 31.1; *Them.* 11.3 (exhibiting his self-restraint), 20.1–2 (his narrow patriotism); *Brut.* 22.4–6 and 35 (also 13.4–11 and 23.5–7 depicting Porcia’s extraordinary determination and boldness); *Cat. Mai.* 8–9, 12.5–7, 22–23.3, 27.1–4 (Cato’s attitude toward Carthage and Greece exhibit his utter “chauvinism”), and 17.2–5 (characterizing Lucius Quintius, the brother of Flamininus); *Comp. Dion-Brut.* 5.2–4 (depicting

- Augustus' magnanimity); *Pomp.* 2.5–11; *Cat. Min.* 2.1–5, 3.3–7. For anecdotes functioning as representatives of character, see also Beck (2000).
- 47 Theophrastus' testimony at *Arist.* 25 (see *Arist. Ath. Const.* 23.2) appears to modify the picture of Aristides' absolute justice (cf. also Duff (1999a) 132–133), but Plutarch does not seem to accept it (see esp. *Arist.* 25.9). Cf. also Perrin (1901) 324–325. On the other hand, *Arist.* 13.2 (a *hapax* evidence) does not really contradict Aristides' righteousness; cf. again Perrin (1901) 291–292, and Flacelière (1969) 34 n. 1.
 - 48 Duff (1999a) provides an excellent analysis of Plutarch's *Cato Minor*, the gist of which is that "Cato has also become an example of misguided extremism," and that his "excessive commitment to virtue" and "blind adherence to principle may not always be the best course" (p. 158). My own reading of this *Life* is different, but I cannot elaborate here (cf. Nikolaidis (2009) 281); suffice it to say, however, that excessive commitment to virtue and consistent adherence to principles *ought to be* the best course.
 - 49 For *Alcibiades* see mainly Duff (1999a) 54 and n. 70, 228, and 229–240 (see esp. 240: "after all, how could Alcibiades, the individualist *extraordinaire*, be a paradigm for anything – except individuality itself?"); for *Antony* see Pelling (1988a) and Pelling (1990b) 229–231; cf. also Billault (2005/2006) and Brenk (1992) esp. 4375–4402; for *Lysander* and *Sulla* see Duff (1999a) 161–204, esp. 177ff (on the ambiguity and moral complexity of Lysander), and 185ff. (the more immoral, but also more successful Sulla); Stadter (1992), (1996), and (2003/2004); Candau Morón (2000). According to Duff (1999a), complex *Lives* with problematic morality are also *Phocion–Cato Minor* (pp. 131–160), *Pyrrhus–Marius* (pp. 101–130), and *Coriolanus* (pp. 205–220). In my view, these *Lives* are simple and quite moralistic, as the corresponding heroes are rather straightforward and predictable. For *Coriolanus* cf. also Russell (1963).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For Plutarch as a moralist in general see Flacelière's brief survey ((1987) LXXXVIII–CXX). Gréard's *De la morale de Plutarque* (1866) can still be consulted with profit. The most recent work dealing with various aspects of Plutarchan ethics (mostly in connection with his *Moralia* treatises) is Roskam and Van der Stockt (2011), where Martin (133–150) and Opsomer (151–173) are outstanding for the theoretical questions they raise and discuss. For the influence of previous thinkers on Plutarch's moral (and philosophical) thought, see A. Bellanti, "La teoria plutarchea della virtù tra platonismo, pitagorismo e aristotelismo," in P. Volpe Cacciatore and F. Ferrari (eds.), *Plutarco e la cultura della sua età* (Naples, 2007) 223–264, and most contributions in Pérez Jiménez et. al. (1999). For Plutarch's moralism in the *Lives* Pelling ((1995) = (2002) 237–251) and Duff (1999a: 52–71 and (2007/2008)) offer particularly insightful approaches; both believe that Plutarch's moralism is implicit and descriptive rather than explicit and protreptic. Stadter's (2000 and 2003/2004) discussion of virtue in the *Lives* is also relevant here, and so is Duff's ((1999a) 13–51) thorough examination of Plutarch's programmatic statements. On the other hand, Gill (1983) and (1990) breaks new and fertile ground with his crucial distinction between character and personality, the former being directly connected with moral judgments and societal norms, and the latter, being ethically neutral, with one's individuality. Pelling ((1990b) 213–262 = (2002) 301–338) is a convincing response to Gill's theory; see also Ingenkamp (1992). Finally, as to Plutarch's ways of characterization, see Dihle ((1970) 57–103, including the Peripatetic background), Bucher-Isler (1972), Pelling ((1988b) = (2002) 283–300 and (1990a)) and Beck (forthcoming).

CHAPTER 25

Childhood and Youth

Carmen Soares

1. Introduction: Terms Used to Designate Children and Youths

As with any literary genre, biography has its traditional themes. When we read works of a biographical nature we have the legitimate expectation of approaching the life of the subject from his/her birth until his/her death. Over a period of time that varies from person to person, a life proceeds from infancy to adulthood, or, in the best-case scenario, to old age. The individual experiences a process of physiological, psychological, and social development that coincides with the different stages in the life cycle. From a reading of those passages, wherein Greek and Latin writers identify between three to seven distinct phases of life, we arrive at the following conclusion: there is disagreement regarding either the designation of age categories or the age categories themselves established to differentiate each stage (Golden (1990) 12–22; Eyben (1996) 80–82; Harlow and Laurence (2002) 15–17; Rawson (2003) 134–145). Our investigation will focus on the two main phases in which life is divided before the adult age – in English they are designated “childhood” and “youth.” From a methodological standpoint, we will begin by examining the usage of certain words by Plutarch to refer to children and young men in the *Lives*. Our aim will be to establish some idea of the variations in terminology and meanings associated with childhood and youth that were available to the author at the time. Moreover we will undertake to clarify the semantics of the words in question: *brephos*, *nepios*, *paidion*, *paidarion*, *pais*, *antipais*, *meirakion*, *neos*, *neanias*, *neaniskos*, *ephebos*. At the outset it should be understood that not all terms have a uniform meaning. In fact, as we will observe, the author employs, in most cases, different terms to designate the same reality.

A study of the passages in which *brephe* (pl. *brephe*) is used reveals that it always means baby when it refers to the newborn twins Romulus and Remus (*Rom.* 2.7, 3.5, 4.1, 2, and 4, 6.1) and to the child born to the widower of the Spartan king Polydectes (*Lyc.* 3). More specifically, because in this last passage it refers to a baby in its mother's womb, the term *brephe* can also be understood as "fetus." The most common meaning ("baby") is also attested in the following contexts: when Plutarch describes the care provided by the nurses of Laconia to the babies they raise (*Lyc.* 16.4); when he mentions the babies of Spartan mothers (*Lyc.* 17.8), the son of Cato the Elder, whom his wife washes and wraps (*Cat. Mai.* 20.4), and the newborn son of Pompey, the grandson of Julius Caesar (*Caes.* 23.6).

Nepios (fem. *nepia*) has a broader meaning; it is defined as "small child" because it is used to mean both "baby" and "children of young age." The first meaning can be observed in the following references: the twins nursed by the wolf (*Rom.* 21.8); Dionysus, the newborn god, bathed by the nurses after his birth (*Lys.* 28.7). In this case, it is also a synonym for *brephe*. The understanding of the term "children of young age" is unequivocal when it is used as an adjective (a), or as the synonym of a noun having the same meaning (b). This happens when: (a) Plutarch adds the adjective *nepia* to the diminutive *paidia* ("little children") to identify the sons whom the Sabines carried in their arms (*Rom.* 19.2) – in other words, a *nepios* is an infant; the noun *tekna* (pl. of *teknon*, "son") is qualified as *nepia* (*Cam.* 21.1) or determines the neutral quality of the noun (*ta nepia ton teknon*, *Mar.* 27.2) – an expression used to mean "small sons"; the word *nepios* helps to clarify the meaning denoted by the more general term *pais* (*Sull.* 37.6; *Luc.* 31.3); (b) Pyrrhus is referred to in the same passage (*Pyrrh.* 2.1) as a *nepios* and a *paidion* who requires the care of nurses.

Paidion (pl. *paidia*) is the diminutive formed from *pais* and the suffix *-ion*. It is a synonym of the two aforementioned words, *brephe* and *nepios*. It means "baby," as is evident in its employment, in the same passage, as a synonym of the word *brephe* (*Rom.* 2.7) and in its association with the verb *tikto* ("to give birth") (*Per.* 1.1; *Pom.* 53.5). The meaning "small children" is reinforced in various ways: in its conjunction, previously mentioned, with *nepion* (*Rom.* 19.2) or with the adjective *mikron* ("small") (*Ages.* 25.11; *Brut.* 31.4); its usage in the same passage as a synonym of *nepios* (*Aem.* 33.6) or of the diminutive "little daughter" (*thygatrion*, *Aem.* 10.6); as it refers to *paidia* as "children that must be carried" (*Cor.* 33.4) or those whom their mother could carry about suspended from her neck (*Brut.* 31.5).

Paidarion (pl. *paidaria*) is another diminutive of the word *pais* that refers to *paidion*, but also refers to older children. It means "baby" when it refers to the twins Romulus and Remus when they were exposed (*Rom.* 8.2); to the newborn orphan of king Polydectes and nephew Lycurgus (*Lyc.* 3. 5); to the Spartan babies whose robustness and right to life were evaluated by a council of elders (*Lyc.* 16.1); to the sons of slaves nursed by the wife of Cato (*Cat. Mai.* 20.5); to the baby a woman gives birth to (*Lys.* 26.1); to the newborn (*to gennethen*) of Agesilaus' spouse (*Ages.* 3.1). The meaning "small child" is a result of the use with the adjective *mikron* (*Cat. Min.* 3.8). We speculate that this is also the word's meaning when it refers to a child who had enough strength to hit his mentor (*Lyc.* 30.7). Obviously none of the two previous occurrences allows us to argue an age limit to a *paidarion*. However, the following passages seem to suggest that the term was also used to refer to children older than the ones we already referred to because they seem to be capable of escaping an enemy camp and bringing vital information to improve

morale (*Luc.* 9.7), of participating in naval combat, leading small fleets, and returning insults to their adversaries (*Nic.* 24.1), and of dragging a cadaver through the city and promoting the public humiliation of the deceased (*Dion* 35.6).

The usage of *pais* (pl. *paides*) indicates that it is a polysemy word *par excellence*. The truth is that it functions as a synonym to all other terms used in denoting individuals who are between infancy and youth. One of its broadest meanings is that of “son of.”¹ We maintain that the general application of this term means “the one who is not yet an adult (*aner*),” as if the cycle of life was divided into three main stages: *pais*, *aner*, and *geron* (“elder”). Using as an example the bravery of the Spartan Isidas during the surprise attack of the Thebans (*Ages.* 34.9), Plutarch affirms that Isidas was “at an age when human beings blossom most appealingly, as they pass from boyhood (*ek paidon*) to manhood (*eis andras*).” We can observe the same dichotomy in children/adults in the *Life of Phocion* (7.3), when, after the death of his friend Chabrias, the protagonist takes upon himself the post of educator of the orphan Ctesippus, hence moving from being a “boy” (*ton paida*) to a “good man” (*andra poiein agathon*). To these two stages, we must add the phase of old age to form the tripartite suggested by Plutarch when he mentions the Roman leaders in the war (*Marc.* 1.5). In this passage he refers to them as “when they were young” (*hoi neoi ontes*) they battled the Carthaginians in Sicily, and “when they were mature” (*akmazontes*) they battled the Gauls, and finally “in old age” (*ede de gerontes*) they faced Hannibal and the Carthaginians again.

Furthermore, a subdivision between the period that precedes adulthood and old age frequently may be undertaken. For example, the observation made about the physical beauty of Alcibiades (*Alc.* 1.4), i.e. that it was always present in all ages and stages of his development, addresses the following sequence: *pais*, *meirakion*, *aner*, and *metoporon* (“late autumn”). These four stages correspond to childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age. The same sequence of ages, with the exception of the last one, appears in the *Life of Alexander* (11.6).

There was a distinction between age groups regarding the physical ability to fight. As we read in the *Life of Eumenes* (1.2), because the *pankration* was more violent, it was practiced by the eldest youths, known as *meirakia* (*pankratia meirakion*), while the fight maneuvers (*pale*) could be executed by the youngest, the *paides* (*palaismata paidon*).

In his *Lives* Plutarch does not offer an answer to the exact moment when an individual crosses the threshold from childhood to youth, but they do reveal general conceptions of the time. As a *pais* (translation for the Latin term *puer*), the Roman child wears a toga with a purple belt (*toga praetexta*) and carries around his neck a locket called a *bullula* (*Sert.* 14.4). The abandonment of these two articles of clothing and their replacement with a new all-white garment (*toga virilis*) symbolize the passage into youth. According to the Greek tradition, this transition from childhood to youth was signaled by the enrollment of the individual into the military training program, when he would then become an *ephebos*.² Rawson ((2003) 142) observes that in the Roman tradition, there was no fixed age at which this transition would take place, since it occurred sometime between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years old. Parents were free to choose the most opportune time, and celebrate this transition in the manner they saw fit.³ We have already pointed out that, at twenty years of age, Alexander is called both *pais* and *meirakion* (*Alex.* 11.6). Augustus assumes a post as a consul, an exceptional concession for someone “who was considered just a *meirakion*” (*Brut.* 27.3). From a legal point of

view “the young Roman was [...] a minor until he had completed his 25th year” (Eyben (1981) 329). Moreover, in public life a young man had to “wait” until the age of twenty-seven (from 180 BCE on, according to the *Lex villia annalis*), thirty (under Sulla), or twenty-five (from the time of Augustus on) before starting his political career, the *cursus honorum* (Eyben (1981) 332). There were exceptions to the rules, as the later case of Augustus illustrates.⁴

Antipais (pl. *antipaidēs*) is formed by the attachment of the prefix *anti-* (“opposite, facing, instead”) to the noun *pais*; it refers to the individual who finds himself on the transitional edge of boyhood, i.e. who is no longer really a boy anymore, and is entering the phase known as adolescence (*Aem.* 22.4; *Pomp.* 76.7; *Cic.* 7.7; *Dion* 55.4). A passage in the *Life of Philopoemen* (1.2) confirms that the age group that follows childhood is denoted by the term *antipais*. This passage refers to the formation of a philosophical character (under the guidance of two disciples of the Academy, Ekdelos and Demophanes) and to the type of knowledge that a “child” (*pais*) did not have access to, but an individual who was “more than a child” (*antipais*) did.

Meirakion (pl. *meirakia*), as we have seen above (*Alc.* 1.4), corresponds to a noun used to mean “youth.” The main aspect of this age group is physical strength (*ton somatos rhome*, *Thes.* 6.2). As a result, it refers to the stage of life that begins with service in the military (*Cor.* 3.1), at around the age of seventeen (*Cat. Mai.* 1.8), as the individual is found at the height of his abilities (*meirakioi kath’ horan akmazonti*, *Pyrrh.* 26.18). Although we cannot establish fixed temporal boundaries, Plutarch, in designating the beginning or the end of youth, gives us some precise numbers. Both young Augustus at twenty years of age (*Brut.* 27.3) and Cato the Elder at seventeen, then again at twenty-five (*Cat. Mai.* 2.3),⁵ were referred to by the term *meirakion*. Both were individuals who successfully held command and engaged in battle, and who were evidently recognized as “young men” (*neoi andres*), which in a military context means “warriors.” Some of the passages that confirm this semantics are the following: *Cic.* 45.1–2 (Augustus is simultaneously named *meirakion* and *neon andra*); *Philop.* 7.5 (Philopoemen inspires military pride in “each one of the young men,” *kat’ andra ton neon hekaston*); *Caes.* 45.3 (the cavalry of Pompey is referred to as “young men,” *andras ... neous*); *Arat.* 36.5 (Cleomenes, in contrast with his adversary Aratus, was at the height of his vigor and was known as “a man who was daring and young,” *pros andra tolmeten kai neon*).

Neos (masc. pl. = *neoi*) can also be used to indicate the age of a young man; this was the case of Demetrius (*Demetr.* 5.3), son of Antigonos Monophthalmus of Macedonia, who at twenty-two years old, though “young and inexperienced” (*neos kai apeiros*), commands for the first time an army against a “man” (*andri*), Ptolemy. The following passage illustrates the opposition of the two adversaries and the conflict that was intensified by age differences. The loser is no more than just a *neos*, while the winner finds himself in the next stage of “adult male” (*aner*). Among the numerous occurrences of the adjective *neos*, we highlight the instances where the word is deliberately presented in opposition to “old,” in both the forms *presbyteros* (*Aem.* 39.8; *Mar.* 46.7; *Agis* 6.1–2; *Cleom.* 12.4; *Nic.* 11.3; *Pomp.* 8.3 and 5; *Alex.* 53.1) and *geron* (*Cic.* 46.1; *Nic.* 12.1). *Meirakion* (*Cim.* 4.4) and *neanias* (*Cic.* 46.2) are also terms with equivalent meaning that are employed as synonyms of *neos*.

Neanias (noun from the adjective family of *neos*) and/or the respective diminutive *neaniskos* (pl. *neaniskoi*) are recurrent forms used to indicate “youth.” They frequently

serve as synonyms for other words with the same meaning: *meirakion* (*Mar.* 14.5–6; *Arat.* 6.4–5; *C. Gracch.* 16.1–2; *Cam.* 15.3–4; *Phoc.* 20.1 and 4) and *neos* (*Cat. Mai.* 22.2–3). With regard to the term *neaniskos*, there is evidence that its usage differs from the term used to designate the stage that precedes it, i.e. the *pais* stage (*Aem.* 33.6: *neaniskoi* and *paides* are identified as distinctive elements that are part of the same sacrificial procession), and from the stage that succeeds it, the *aner* stage (*Cat. Mai.* 22.4: Carneades, an academic philosopher, and Diogenes, a Stoic, are both introduced as Greek *andres* who awaken great enthusiasm among the Roman “youth” – *neaniskoi/neoi*). As noted above, when we focused on *neos*, *neaniskos* can be also used as an opposite of “old man” (cf. *presbyteros*, *Lyc.* 12.12).

Ephebos (pl. *epheboi*) corresponds to the stage immediately following childhood, as we saw in the passage of Caesarion from *pais* to *ephebos* (*Ant.* 71.3) and confirmed by various passages where *epheboi* and *paides* are distinguished (*Pelop.* 33.5; *Phil.* 16.8; *Pomp.* 40.3; *Cat. Min.* 13.1; *Arat.* 53.6). At around the age of eighteen boys began their military preparation, which lasted about two years. This was a probationary period in which the young man, after going through the training known as *ephebia*, was deemed able to perform the primary functions of a full-fledged citizen in the splendor of his physical power: to become a soldier. In practical terms, the *epheboi* are those preparing themselves for combat, and the *neaniskoi* are the young soldiers (*Phil.* 11.2; *Aem.* 17.3; *Fab.* 22.3; *Thes.* 26.3 and 5–7; *Pyrrrh.* 30.6, 33.2; *Phoc.* 7.4). Although there is a distinct difference between the two groups (which also relates to another word that means youth, *neos*: *Cleom.* 2.2), both *epheboi* and *neaniskoi*, because they are required to maintain themselves in good condition, are obligated to share the same space for physical exercises, the *stoa*, “colonnade” (*Cim.* 16.5).

To this vast number of terms used to designate individuals, it is necessary to add two fundamental expressions that address basic and abstract notions of childhood and youth. The first term is called “age of childhood” (*paidike helikia*: *Alc.* 7.1; *Cim.* 1.3; *paidike hora*: *Cat. Mai.* 17.2), and the second is referred to as “youth” (*neotes*: *Them.* 2.7; *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 1.4; *Cic.* 10.4; *Marc.* 1.4). From a sociological point of view, an analysis of the feminine universe is not possible because our source, Plutarch’s *Lives*, has imposed that choice on us. Women and girls are mentioned infrequently.⁶

2. Methodology

Even though there are over a hundred passages where children and the young are mentioned, the reader should not expect to find a systematic approach to the subject in the *Lives*. References to the subject or any individual can appear at any moment in the narrative (though, for chronological reasons, they occur more often in the early chapters). The information this chapter provides is more sociological than ethical in nature. In other words, I sought data relevant to the condition of children and youths in the social group they belong to. Therefore, this chapter is not interested in an analysis of the text within the text (which would consider the character and actions of children and the young as part of the heuristics of the respective *Life*), but within its context (which makes it possible to perceive some of the main ideas that concerned Plutarch, an author from the second century CE).

Consequently, the image we trace from Plutarch's *Lives* allows us to observe that these two initial periods of life are conditioned not only by cultural factors, but also by a principle that is methodological in nature – the principle of qualitative selectivity. As we read in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* (1.2), the narrative does not address all the famous feats of the protagonist (a method used by historiography) but, above all, emphasizes some deeds (not necessarily the greatest), dictums, and anecdotes that may reveal his character in greater depth (a method used by the genre of biography). As the passage referred to illustrates, the principle of qualitative selectivity is applied in each of the *Lives* considered in its totality. Plutarch manages to be more specific about his principle by applying it to the two main stages that a man's life is divided into, the adult age and what precedes it. For example, an athlete who gains a prize in the adult category (*en andrasi*) stops talking about his victories in his youth (*tas paidkas ... nikas*) because these are overshadowed by the multitude and magnitude of the contests and wars that come later (*Pomp.* 8.7). Although youth can present itself as a fertile period for the accumulation of biographical data, it can easily be overlooked to allow room for more mature feats.

Beyond considerations of methodology, Plutarch perceived that his knowledge of the childhood and youth of his biographical subjects was limited by the sources themselves. Pelling ((1990) 216) argues that the abundance or lack of data about these periods of life depended on what the sources revealed. That means that when a certain aspect is not mentioned in the biography, it is because it was unavailable to Plutarch and not due to deliberate exclusion on his part.

The analyses of the vocabulary that relates to childhood and youth revealed that the same term (*pais*) describes someone from birth until his twenty-fourth birthday, and, despite the exclusive aspects of each age, the two periods confront the individual with similar realities. Therefore, I chose to avoid a traditional bipartite dichotomy and instead explored the two most important aspects of the psychosomatic identity of each individual in these two phases of life: the physical portrait and the psychological portrait.

An in-depth study of the education of children and youths in the *Lives* is the subject for another work (Soares 2011). In the present analysis of the psychological portrait, education is a theme that appears in the background since *physis* (one's natural endowment) and *nomoi* (customs and traditions, a generic term that includes education) act as tools that mold the psyche of the individual.

3. The Physical Portrait

The physical condition of a baby is taken into account even before the baby is born. It seems that the mother's diet influences the outcome of the fetus. A light diet (*oligositia*) is the key to give birth to lean and well-formed babies (*Lyc.* 17.8). And this could be vital because among the Spartans, good build and robustness in the newborn were requirements that determined his right to life (*Lyc.* 16.1). The elder council was responsible for deciding whether the baby would live or die based on these physical criteria. A "flawed and deformed" baby (*Lyc.* 16.2) was condemned to die.⁷

To have a well-built figure and vigor are characteristics that are emphasized when addressing children and youth, but not the elderly. The "beauty of the body" (*to kallos tou somatos*) is an attribute that does not endure into old age. With the passing of the

years the “beauty of the *pais* dies” (*Arist.* 2.4). Plutarch finds the exception that confirms the rule in the figure of Alcibiades, who was gifted with “natural beauty and physical perfection” (*Alc.* 1.4), throughout his entire life. Also, regarding the physical vigor of the individual, twice in similar contexts – the funeral procession of a Greek general (Pelopidas) and of a Roman (Aemilius) – the event is conducted with a demonstration of strength and homage for the deceased. In the first case, the young men, as sacred figures (*epheboi kai paides kai hierais*, *Pelop.* 33.4), transport the dead general; in the second case, the allusion to strength is more evident as Plutarch writes that those “who possess the robust bodies and youth” (*Aem.* 39.8) carry the deceased, in contrast to the elders (*hoi de presbyteroi*) who follow, and recite the titles the deceased bore and the glorious deeds he accomplished.

The reference to beauty and strength is shown in the text as another element of the characterization of the individual or as a decisive factor of the individual’s behavior in history. Plutarch refers to the beauty of a *pais*, without this characteristic having any effect on historical events in the following passages: the beautiful appearance of Cleonymus, with whom the son of the Spartan king Agesilaus II (*kalou ten opsin*, *Ages.* 25.1) fell in love; Agesilaus himself was in love in another instance with a boy of extraordinary beauty (*kalliston*, 11.2); Panteus identified as the “most handsome” (*kalliston*) of the young men with whom king Cleomenes (*Cleom.* 37.14) falls in love; Anthipates, a *meirakion*, “one of many with such natural beauty,” who initially rejects the rival Themistocles (*Them.* 18.2); the weakness of Gaius Lucius, nephew of Marius, for “handsome youth” (*meirakion kalon*, *Mar.* 14.4); the youngest son of the consul M. Fluvius Flaccus, a *neaniskos*, who is “particularly attractive” (*kallistos*, *C. Gracch.* 16.1). If we continue with the neutral description of physical aspects, it is important to consider, for example, the height (*megethos*) and strength (*rhome*) of the young Remus (*Rom.* 7.5).

We will now evaluate the passages wherein beauty and/or possession of a good physique have served to trigger events, or to influence their outcome. In societies where homoerotic relationships, in general, and pederasty, in particular, were practiced and accepted,⁸ physical attractiveness captivates both men and women. A series of episodes present the same common denominator: the physical beauty of a child or youth stimulates the passion of an adult. In terms of the consequences this may have for the lives of those involved, the results differ:

- Political hostilities in adulthood: two famous Athenian statesmen, Themistocles and Aristides (*Them.* 3.2; *Arist.* 2.2–4), transferred into their political activities a juvenile rivalry born from the attraction both felt for the same handsome boy, Stesilaus.
- Condemnation of the suitor by the senate: accused by Marcellus, the father of the beautiful boy who suffered the annoyance Capitolinus was condemned to pay a fine for his behavior (*Marc.* 2).
- Suicide of the “boy of young age” (*pais anebos*, *Demetr.* 24.3) when he is surprised alone by a suitor whose attentions he repeatedly avoids, and as a result sacrifices himself in the name of his country (*patria*) and beauty itself (*axia ... tou kallous phronesas*, *Demetr.* 24.5).
- Homicide of the suitor who, as in the previous case, was willing to use force to attain the favors of a young man who possessed “physical good looks and nobility of spirit” (*somatos kallei kai phyches phronemati*, *Cim.* 1.2).

- Military defeat: it is also because of beauty that the cavalry of Pompey is defeated in the battle of Pharsalus against Caesar; due to fear of becoming disfigured by the attacking enemy, they withdraw (*Caes.* 45.3–4; *Pomp.* 69.5–6).
- Freedom: the good looks of young Marius awaken the compassion and love of one of the concubines of the king of Numidia who lets him escape captivity (*Mar.* 40.11–12); another form of freedom that can be achieved through beauty and status is that given by Nicias to a beardless slave, whose physical attributes made him deserving of warm applause after his performance as Dionysus in a chorus (*Nic.* 3.4).

If this last passage illustrates certain social benefits brought about by beauty, let us consider a case where the opposite is true. In other words, a case in which the military service performed by a *neanias*, the Spartan Acrotatus, that saved his city results in the clear embellishment of his physical portrait. According to Plutarch (*Pyrrh.* 28.5), when returning to his post covered in blood but victorious, he seemed to the women of Sparta “taller and more beautiful” (*maizon ... kai kallion*). *Paides* of extraordinary beauty, who become tempting to others, become a “product” that can be sold or offered as a gift to important adult men (allowing those men to consider the transaction offensive or not, cf. *Alex.* 22.1).

In a context where beauty has a particular emphasis, it is not surprising that its opposite, an ugly and ridiculous appearance, serves as a counterpoint in the presentation of Alexander’s servant, who is a gracious singer (*Alex.* 35.6). Weakness and softness can also explain what happened to Demosthenes, who was prevented from receiving the physical preparation proper to his age (*Dem.* 4.4). The titles and nicknames received during childhood can equally reflect those contrasting realities. His “good physical condition” (*eumorphia*) gave Damocles, who was harassed by Demetrius, the nickname of “beautiful” (*Demetr.* 24). In the case of Demosthenes, it was his fragile physical appearance that prompted other children to nickname him Batalus (*Dem.* 4.5). Moreover, the tradition of assigning nicknames and titles is presented as an act “characteristic of youth” (*meirakiode ... prosynymian*, *Per.* 39.2) and not of adults (who supposedly achieved full rationality).

We could conclude that good appearance is nature’s gift (or not), hence the importance of maternal diet during pregnancy and the motivation of Spartans to eliminate babies with overt defects or abnormalities. This would be a precipitous conclusion because Plutarch acknowledges belief in education exerting an influence on the formation of the body. For Alexander (*Alex.* 71.1) the education he demanded be given to the Persian *paides* (in training as much as in studies) produced visible physical effects: virile bodies and handsome features. It is equally important to consider that we also find in the *Life of Alexander* (72.2) the idea that diet adjusts itself to one’s age and professional activity. Young people and soldiers have an identical relationship with food, i.e. because they burn many calories, their bodies require a greater intake of nutrients. That is why they are said to find it too hard to follow a rigorous regime. If a sick man acts like these people such behavior can cost him his life. The example presented by Plutarch tells the story of a man who died because, immediately after he left Alexander’s company, he devoured a boiled fowl and drank fresh wine in abundance.

If the virility of the body is something that can be achieved through training, this implies that other young men may not have a virile body and for this reason they resemble

young maids (*parthenoi*). In other words, they have a feminine appearance (*thelyphanneis*), as in the case of two of Theseus' companions (*Thes.* 23.2). These female resemblances can be illustrated by natural or artificial characteristics. A fresh aspect (*nearous*, *Thes.* 23.2) and beardless face (as with Clodius, cf. *Caes.* 10.1 and *Cic.* 28.2, and the Athenians instructed by Solon, cf. *Sol.* 8.5) are natural characteristics that easily help men disguise themselves as women, or as it is referred to in the Greek text, "to resemble young maids" (*parthenois homoiousthai*, *Thes.* 23.3). Other adjustments are required in order for a young man to resemble a "young girl." In his *Life of Theseus* Plutarch offers, in an indirect way, some details concerning this cosmetic procedure of transformation. These data help us to apprehend the physical stereotype of the *parthenos*. In order to acquire feminine features it is necessary to have soft white skin (as dictated by the practice of keeping young girls out of the sun and the custom of taking warm baths) and treated hair (with the application of lotions), as well as the adoption of a feminine tone of voice, mannerisms, and women's clothes (*Thes.* 23.3). This may include, as we read in the *Life of Solon* (8.5), the use of a headband and sandals. The voice is in fact an essential aspect of the feminine identity, as was proved by the failure of Clodius' disguise as lute-girl when he spoke (*Caes.* 10.3; *Cic.* 28.3).

4. The Psychological Portrait

Before we commence with an identification of the most important psychological traits in children and young men, it is important to address the fact that there are two contradictory opinions about the relation between body (*soma*) and spirit (*psyche*). The physical portrait either reflects the characteristics of the mind or differs completely from it. Plutarch presents the first argument in the following passages: the bodies of Romulus and Remus, which were great and beautiful, reveal that the children will turn into manly, bold, high-spirited individuals (*Rom.* 6.3); when Plutarch writes that it is by "looking into the face (*prosopon*)" of Remus that Numitor detects "the courage and boldness of his soul (*psyche*)" (*Rom.* 7.5), this reflects the idea that the face is the mirror of the soul; beyond the face, there are also the voice and the actions (even if they occur in a children's game) that express the character of the individual (*Cat. Min.* 1.3). The contrary opinion, i.e. that physical appearance has nothing to do with the soul, is taken from *Thes.* 23.2: the *neaniskoi* of feminine appearance have "manly spirits" (*androdeis de tas psychas*).

Our discussion will begin with the main psychological characteristics of those who have not yet achieved adulthood. There are a great variety of psychological profiles. Comparing the lives of Cimon and Lucullus, the biographer concludes that the *neotes* of Cimon could be described as "blameworthy and licentious" whereas Lucullus' was "disciplined and moderate" (*Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 1.4). Before we begin to look into the most important examples of behavior, it should be observed that while bad conduct is criticized, good conduct is praised. We perceive a clear reference to this when *parthenoi* sing praises (*enkomia*) to the *neaniskoi* who possess manly qualities (*andragathia*) just as they jest (*skommata*) with those who do not (*Lyc.* 14).

The tendency toward licentious behavior can be associated with the young, but adults interested in captivating their support explore it. Catiline corrupts the Roman youth by

providing them with “pleasures (*hedonas*), drinks (*potous*), and women’s love (*gynaikon erotas*)” (*Cic.* 10.4). Readily susceptible to the influence of the eldest, young men could easily lose their way by choosing the path of a bad life (i.e. over-indulgence in *hedonas* and *potous*) because of the lessons they received from inappropriate masters (for this reason Cicero distanced his son from the company of the master of rhetoric Gorgias, *Cic.* 24.8). The young Mark Antony was also corrupted by the influence of others. Curio “introduced him to drinking-sessions, women, and all kinds of extravagant and immoderate expenses” (*Ant.* 2.4). From these two examples we can infer that they were also susceptible to the influence of third parties. The murderer of Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, corresponded to this type of susceptible youth because he was enticed by Olympias (*Alex.* 10.6). Because these encounters take place in a phase of life in which they are still learning, these individuals strike one as being rather impressionable or, as we see in the *Life of Cato the Younger* (1.9), they allow themselves to be easily persuaded by the older individual. However, the inverse situation is also true: that of a father or mentor who succumbs to the influence of a son or protégé due to the emotional bonds that exist between them. For example, Augustus persuades Cicero, at that time an old man, to assign him the consulship (at twenty years of age, he was too young to legally assume this office, *Brut.* 27.3).

Let us return to the hedonism of youth. Aratus, who had been in exile in Argos, intended to deceive the spies of Nicocles, tyrant of Sicyon, in order to depose him from his native city, and he pretended to be a rich young man on a typical day (*Arat.* 6.4). After some time conversing with his friends and exercising, he then pretended to have surrendered himself to “pleasures and drinking” (*eis hedones kai potous*). In order to make it believable, the *meirakion* went home with some young men and their servants who bought garlands and lamps, and contracted harp and flute players who were responsible for the musical entertainment of the banquet. The spies were convinced that Aratus was harmless because he totally surrendered to the preoccupations of his age. The members of Dionysius’ court in Sicily also surrounded the young tyrant with the habitual entertainment for his age: drinks, women, and activities that were generically referred to as “other unseemly pastimes” (*Dion* 7.4).

Plutarch uses a composed noun, *philedonia*, to refer to the “fondness for pleasure” that is a characteristic accepted in youth but not in old age. This is illustrated when he observes that the Roman general Sulla, even after becoming old, did not abandon “his susceptibility to love and his powerful sensuality” (*Sull.* 2.6). Moreover, *philedonia* can emerge during childhood (*ek paidon*), as happened with the emperor Otho (*Galb.* 19.1). The daily consumption of wine can become an addiction. To become *philopotes* (“fond of wine”) and *ataktos* (“undisciplined”) are two of the flaws ascribed to the son of Phocion (*Phoc.* 20.1). Cimon (*Cim.* 4.4) is also characterized in the same way, but is referred to as *polypotes* (“hard drinker”). The clarification that this behavior “resembles that of his grandfather” indicates a belief in inherited genetic behavior. Plutarch also suggests that in certain situations the ingestion of *akratos*, pure wine (contrary to the Greek and Roman tradition of mixing it with water), makes young people more undisciplined (*akolaston neon*) and more inclined to acts of violence (*Alc.* 18.8). It is easy to assume that, given the enthusiasm of youths for fighting in general and between cocks in particular (*Lyc.* 20.14), they would foster a more volatile temperament. The young are different from their elders because they are *polemopoioi* (“war makers”), while the latter

are *eirenopoioi* ("peace makers") (*Nic.* 11.3). Even during childhood recourse to violence serves to relieve anger, as we see in the attitude of Cassius who, while "still a boy" (*eti pais on*), gives the son of Sulla a beating, because he celebrated the power of his father (*Brut.* 9.1–2).

Depending on the character of the individual or the process of maturation over the years, there are non-violent ways that rage can manifest itself. For example, Cato the Younger (*Cat. Min.* 7) found in poetry an escape from "the anger of youth" (*orgei kai neoteti*) that was ignited by his rival, who stole his bride. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, children and young men demonstrate a lack of courage that distinguishes them from adults. Two typical demonstrations of this "moral incompetence" (Golden (1990) 5) are the fear babies have of being alone in the dark (*Lyc.* 16.4) and the tremors felt by young men when experiencing a ritual of initiation (*Cic.* 22.2). Less honorable but worth mentioning is the fear experienced by soldiers in the battlefield. When Phocion rebuked Leosthenes, a pretentious young man, about involving the Athenians in the Lamian war (*Pyrrh.* 1), he said that this day would only come when the youth no longer demonstrated the desire to leave their posts (*Phoc.* 23.3). These words illustrate the general's deep contempt for cowardice. In fact the octogenarian Phocion accused a *meirakion* of cowardice for abandoning his post without authorization and advancing against the enemy full of pride, only to immediately retreat. Indiscipline (*ataxia*, literally "abandonment of one's post") and "moral weakness" (*malakia*) – semantic groups that include cowardice – are considered crimes in Greek and Roman law. This idea is confirmed in the *Life of Cicero* (6.2) by the story that when he was quaestor Cicero acquitted some young Romans of good families charged with dishonorable conduct in military service.

The reverse of cowardice – courage – is also a character trait of children and young men, often revealed in the context of war or revolution. Let us begin our discussion with those children who are younger in age – "little children" (*ta paidia ta mikra*) – from the city of Xanthos in Lycia. Evidently, the age group they belong to suggests that most of the decisions underlying their actions originated with their progenitors. On the other hand, Plutarch describes their participation in the collective suicide of the inhabitants surrounded by Brutus, which reveals a great deal of autonomy on the part of the children (*Brut.* 31.4). It is in the participle form of the verb "to ordain, exhort" (*keleno*) that we note the active participation of the children in such a violent act; though in the moral light of the author, it represents the courage to die free in the face of the alternative of becoming slaves as soon as the city is taken over. Plutarch mentions that, as well as the men and women, the children also found death in the following manner: jumping into fire, jumping from the walls surrounding the city, and lastly (which clarifies beyond a doubt their volition and courage) by following their parents to their death, with their necks naked and pressed against the swords of their parents begging (*kelenonta*) them to strike. Even though we cannot overlook the circumstances that contributed to the phenomenon of collective hysteria (note the allusion in the text to the yelling and noise at the time of the suicide: *meta krauges kai alalagmou*), the truth is that faced with being captured, many took it upon themselves to kill even the children. Against the Gauls, Caesar had to fight hard to capture them. It was not the walls that protected the city against the enemies and served as an obstacle but the chariots that formed the fortress (*Caes.* 18.4). In order to mount a defense, the barbarians counted on the help of their women and "sons" (*paides*).

Moving into the pre-adult category, we turn to the *neoi*. They are described as impulsive and gifted with strength and wisdom; some of them are distinguished by the wittiness of their actions. Under this heading we should include the Theban Pelopidas. Although he was one of the youngest to be exiled to Athens for opposing the tyranny of the regime in his own city, he was able to devise a plan to depose the government (*Pel.* 7.1–2). The coup was based on a group of younger men (*oligous de ton neotaton*, *Pel.* 8.1) coming into the city where they would find support. The rebels disguised themselves as hunters in order to pass by without raising suspicion and avoid failure. The allusion to disguise reveals a characteristic that is more common in youth than adults: the flexibility to adapt to new situations. When successful, these acts of bravery receive full recognition with crowns, processions of the city's most distinguished members (e.g. priests, *Pel.* 12.6), and other forms of public recognition described by Plutarch. Marcellus, “though young” (*onti men eti neoi*, *Marc.* 2.2), fought bravely without avoiding a challenge (note to the censorship of cowards!), and this earned him recognition for his military service (he is offered crowns and prizes) as well as the award of civil and religious offices (he gained the post of curule aedile and augur).

Returning to the topic of youth's fondness for pleasures (*philedonia*), we see that not all young men live their lives in a search to satisfy sensual desires. Observe, for example, the case of Agis, the reformist king of Sparta who came to the throne and immediately renounced all fleeting pleasures (*Agis* 4.2). Attracted by the oratorical power of the Academic Carneades, young intellectual Roman men abandoned their “other pleasures and pastimes (*allon hedonon kai diatribon*)” in favor of philosophy (*Cat. Mai.* 22.3).

Other characteristics deriving from the semantics of the stem *phil-* (“to be fond of”) are associated with youth: *philoneika* (“love for victory, competition, contentiousness”) and *philotimia* (“love of honor, ambition, rivalry”). Plutarch mentions (*Num.* 8.21) that *philoneikia* is a typical trait of youths (*meirakiodous*). In the *Life of Pompey* (29.5), he also says that Achilles did not play the part of a man (*poiein andros ergon*) but of a youth (*alla meirakion*) when he prevented the Greeks from reaching Hector, because he wanted the fame. In planning his military strategy, Pompey, like Achilles, is motivated by envy (*phthonos*) and rivalry (*philotimia*) with Metellus.

“Fondness of learning” (*philomathia*) and “fondness of wisdom” (*philosophos*) are traits not easily found in everyone, but, as in contemporary society, we have what are known as gifted children. They often stand out in school and in their circle of friends, possibly becoming the center of attention (and sometimes contempt) of their companions and their respective families. Cicero was one of these children who, as a very young child, wrote a poem (*Cic.* 2.3). Alexander also exemplifies two innate qualities (i.e. that are constitutive of his *physis*): “fondness of learning” (*philologos*) and “fondness of reading” (*philanagnostes*) (*Alex.* 8.2).

In undertaking a semantic analysis of *phil-*, we shall explore its application in the terminology used to refer to father, mother, and brother (the preferential receiver of affection of children, young men, and adults). To demonstrate affection for the father is to be *philopator* (*Demetr.* 3.1), to the mother *philometor* (*Sol.* 27.7; *Sert.* 2.1), and to the brother *philadelphos* (*Sol.* 27.7; *Cat. Min.* 3). The stories of Sertorius and Cato the Younger suggest that the loss of one or both parents during early infancy results in an intensification of emotional bonds with another family member as a way to compensate for that loss. Children do not restrict the expression of their emotions to people. They

pay attention to the importance of domestic animals in the household, as the desperate cries of Aemilius Paulus' little daughter over the death of the dog Perseus illustrate (*Aem.* 10.7–8).

The desire to please is also another typical trait of children's characters. The courtiers of Dionysius, the young tyrant of Syracuse, consistently advised him with thoughts that were pleasing to him instead of those that could help protect his interests. For this reason the tyrant's uncle, Dion, referred to this type of behavior as "a typical way for children to think" (*phronesei paidas*, *Dion* 6.4). Comparisons between adults and children clearly illustrate that the latter were thought to be "mentally incapable" (Golden (1990) 5). Hence the word for "little children" (*paidarioi*) is employed as an effective way to insult adversaries, as Caesar did to the young (*neoi*) sons of Pompey who valiantly confronted him (*Caes.* 56.3). Children were also associated with other intellectually incapable figures because of their intellectual inferiority, such as women, the sick, the insane, and others (Golden (1990) 7; Harlow and Laurence (2002) 34). According to the *Life of Dion* (2.4), the mind of young children (*paidaria*) is compared to those of "women" (*gynaia*) and "disturbed people" (*paraphorous anthropous*) who suffer from an aberration of the soul or distemper of the body. It was this frailty of their rational faculty that allowed them to see ghosts and apparitions.

Cato the Elder, who was known as an exemplary father and was named a "good father" (*pater agathos*, *Cat. Mai.* 20.1), demonstrates another essential attribute of children's personalities: innocence. The avoidance of indecent words as well as bathing with one's children preserves the soul of the infant, which at this point is closest to the divine (Golden (1990) 10). This august advice is given twice in the *Life of Cato the Elder*. Plutarch writes that he considers his wife and son "the holiest of holy things" (20.3). Later on (20.7), he also compares them to the sacred virgins, the Vestals, when he carefully chooses the words he uses in their presence. The recognition of children's divine abilities was also another way to address their proximity to the gods. For example, general Aemilius Paulus understood the death of his daughter's dog Perseus as a good omen since Perseus was named after his enemy (*Aem.* 10.8).

Plutarch also suggests (*Dion* 4.7) that the young think differently from adults by joining the verb *prosdokao* ("to expect, think, suppose") to the adverbial form *neoterikos* ("in a young manner"). Because Dion was a young man and thought like one, he hoped that Plato's teachings would have an effect on the tyrant of Syracuse as they had upon him. Immaturity leads the individual to make bad decisions. However, once they mature, they become capable of recognizing their mistakes and justify them with reference to their inexperience (*apeiros*). Immaturity was the reason why Brutus criticized the suicide of Cato (*Brut.* 40.7). It is mostly in the military that the lack of experience can be a risk to the young man, compromising his good name. Military service began around seventeen years of age (*Cat. Mai.* 1.8; Eyben (1981) 345), and the first few years were dedicated to instruction in fighting and military tactics. Plutarch gives various examples of generals who were more than just military commanders, serving also as "kindly teachers" to their students both during training and while on campaigns (*kai didaskalos eumenes ton polemikon en tais strateias*, *Cor.* 15.7). They were taught the values of modesty and virtue, i.e. not to envy others' success and boast of their own. Aemilius Paulus was another general who fits this description (*Aem.* 17.4, 27.1). Many of the protagonists in the *Lives* participated in military campaigns led by famous generals because the battlefield

was the place for military training. Some of those who participated in their youth in military combat are Coriolanus, by the side of Tarquinius (*Cor.* 3); Cato the Elder, at twenty-five, under the command of Fabius Maximus (*Cat. Mai.* 2.3); the son of Cato at the side of Aemilius Paulus (*Cat. Mai.* 20.10); Pyrrhus with Demetrius (*Pyrrh.* 4.4); Pompey at the side of his father (*Pomp.* 3.1); and Cicero, who served under Sulla (*Cic.* 3.2).

Of the two sons Aemilius Paulus brought with him to war, he favored the youngest, the future Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, who would destroy Carthage (preference for one son can be seen as another timeless characteristic of humankind). Initially the father thought he had died in combat and explained his death as a result of his inexperience (*hyp'apeirias*), which was responsible for his capture by the enemy (in fact he was to reappear covered in blood and rejoicing at his first victory: *Aem.* 22.8). Among the Greeks, Demetrius was another "inexperienced young man (*neos kai apeiros*)," who at twenty-two suffered a terrible defeat in Gaza against Ptolemy (*Demetr.* 5.3). In the following chapter in the *Life of Demetrius* (6.1), it becomes clear that the prestige of victory is directly related to the age of the defeated combatants. This was illustrated by the reply sent by Demetrius' father, Antigonos, after the loss to Ptolemy wherein he says that the general won a victory over "beardless men" (*ageneious*), but that the following battle would take place against men (*andras*). The tone of defiance is obvious in this passage.

Aratus negotiates many difficulties because of his age and inexperience (*os apeirai*, *Arat.* 5.2) in rallying support in an effort to depose the tyrant of Sycion. In fact, it was general knowledge that it was in bad taste and highly inappropriate (*atopon*) to give advice to a leader (in this case, the emperor Galba) who was older than oneself (*hegemona presbyten*), as if he were a *meirakion* (*Galb.* 13.4).

Analysis of these passages in Plutarch's *Lives* indicates that youth is conceived as a formative process that is contingent on experience. This was the case of the young Phocion, who was helped through his acquisition of military experience (*eis empeirian polemikon*, *Phoc.* 6.1). He was such a clever pupil (we suppose) that he was in charge of correcting his commander's nature when he became capricious and violent. In examining Chabrias' attitude, we come to another timeless truth about men and their age: it is not only the oldest who possess reason, and not all young men fail the first time. After the death of Chabrias, Phocion became the tutor of the orphan Ctesippus, whose main and unbearable quality was his attitude (which was evident during a campaign where he insisted on correcting the commander and divided his leadership in the field, *Phoc.* 7.3–4). Pompey represents the opposite example of Ctesippus where a young man demonstrates knowledge of a natural hierarchy based on age, even in the military (*Pomp.* 8.5). An individual who also manifests a great awareness of this principle is Brutus (*Brut.* 3.3). Because he is young, Brutus tries to refuse being nominated general but does not disobey the commands of Cato the Younger, and he returns to Rome with all of Ptolemy's treasures.

There are those of outstanding capacity who acquire the qualities required of a commanding general on the battlefield at an early age. Volunteerism was one of the most sought-after qualities in recognizing military genius. The best known young military geniuses are the following. Fabius Maximus, son of Aemilius Paulus, volunteered to command a mission against king Perseus of Macedonia, despite his *meirakion* status (*Aem.* 15.4). At twenty-three years of age, Pompey decided to violate military protocol and, without being proclaimed commander (*strategos*), started to act like one and headed

an army formed by three legions (*Pomp.* 6.5). His expertise was no less because of his youth, and after he had defeated three offensives by generals of Marius' side, Plutarch calls him a "young adult" (*andri neo*),⁹ who was distinguished by Sulla with the supreme military title of *Imperator* (unheard of for someone who was not a senator). Though Pompey did not refuse the honors, he recognized that at his age a position as an assistant would be more appropriate, and he volunteered to assist Metellus in Gaul (*Pomp.* 8.5). Were his intent and reasoning merely a façade? This is, in fact, a pertinent question if we take into consideration that Pompey had the courage to request that he be allowed to enter Rome in triumph, a concession that was granted only to members of the senate and not even made to Scipio when he defeated the Carthaginians. The references to Pompey's youth and the dismissal of his pretensions are obvious: his beard was barely growing, which means that he was not old enough to be a senator or to wish for himself the honors attached to such officers (*Pomp.* 14.2).

Amongst the Greeks, in particular, the young reformist king Agis distinguishes himself by his charisma and talent, commanding, by order of the magistrates, a Spartan contingent with the mission to assist the commander in chief of the Achaean League, Aratus. This happened when, as Plutarch says (*Agis* 14), he was just a *meirakion*, *neaniskos*, and the youngest of *neoi*. It is by adducing the argument of age and greater experience that the Spartan king delegates to Aratus the decision on how to proceed with maneuvers in Corinth (*Agis* 14.3).

In coming to the close of this list of gifted commanders, I have saved Alexander the Great for last. This is not so much because of his feats – which were of such an extent that he received the name of Alexander the Great – as because what interests us here is the youth of the *hegemones* and confirmation of their military talents. Alexander became the regent leader, even though he was only sixteen, because of his father's absence during an expedition to Byzantium (*Alex.* 9.1). Although he belonged to an age group that today we consider teenagers, he nevertheless was able to quell a rebellion and confront the Greeks in Chaeronea, where he is said to have been the first to challenge an elite force of 300 Thebans known as the Sacred Band.

Imprudence in actions and words are also qualities associated with youth. To the experienced ears of Phocion, the inflammatory words used by Leosthenes, a *meirakion*, to incite war when he addressed the people of Athens demonstrated arrogance and vanity (*Phoc.* 23.2). In the *Life of Alexander* (48.5) we come across the idea that impulsive words are an inherent characteristic of young men that recurs particularly when they are under the influence of wine and are attempting to brag about their military achievements to their beloved women.

In the *Life of Themistocles* (2.7) Plutarch registers that young men are by nature impulsive (i.e. surrender to the impulses, *hormai*), which is emphasized in the *neotes* stage of life. This natural tendency transforms Themistocles into an erratic (*anomalos*) and unstable (*astathemos*) individual, whose behavior can only be rectified by reason (*logos*) and education (*paideia*). Another characteristic of boyhood (*ek paidon*) is the lack of moderation. According to Plutarch, the Theban legislators soothed the young men's characters (*ethe ton neon*) by two different means: through listening to flute music (*aulos*) and stimulating homoerotic relationships in the *palaistra* (*Pelop.* 19.1).

If, as we saw at the beginning of our exploration of this topic, physical traits reveal the soul from infancy, we can question whether maturity might or might not result in

alterations of the *psyche*. When we consider the following two examples, it is clear that Plutarch gives us both a positive and a negative answer. The negative answer is illustrated by the case of Cato the Younger who, from an early age (*ek paidiou*), showed an “unchangeable, impassive, and constant” character (*Cat. Min.* 1.3). The positive answer is encountered in the analysis of psychological traits that are revealed in youth and are subject to change over time. Alcander was living proof of this as he passed from “insubordinate, badly behaved young man to a very well-mannered and responsible adult” under Lycurgus (*Lyc.* 11.6).

5. Final Observations

Having at his disposal a variety of terms that refer to childhood and youth, Plutarch relates and describes with realism and a strong moralizing spirit, at times with hints of idealism, the universal and particular characteristics of individuals in each stage of life.

One of the qualities that make a writer a “classic” is that he produces a timeless and relevant work. This is very evident in Plutarch’s vision of childhood and youth. During his lifetime, he was able to detect patterns (characteristics that repeat themselves) and single out unique traits, just as we may today. Even with the passage of twenty centuries, we can still find in the *Lives* accounts of babies, boys, adolescents, and young men who are described in a manner that elicits empathy in the modern reader.

NOTES

- 1 The term *pais* is broadly used with this meaning throughout the *Vitae*. It appears regularly in the opening chapters where the genealogy of the subject is explained. As clarified by Golden (1990) 15: “When it does not mean ‘child of,’ it refers to a male child before his enrollment in a deme and his consequent entry into civil life, and (less strictly) to a female child before her corresponding change in status, her marriage.” The boys would be around seventeen or eighteen years old.
- 2 Greek and Roman traditions are mentioned side by side, both imposed by the same progenitor or tutor, Mark Antony to two adolescents: Antyllus, born of his union with Fluvia, and Caesarion, son of Cleopatra and Caesar (*Ant.* 71.3).
- 3 Depending on the possessions of the progenitors, the end of childhood could be celebrated with more or less magnitude. According to the life of luxury lived in Egypt, Mark Antony celebrates the integration of young Antyllus and Caesarion in the adult world by promoting processions and parties for many days in Alexandria (*Ant.* 71.3).
- 4 For a more detailed discussion of the various changes introduced affecting the established age at which one was required to present oneself in the different stages of the *cursus honorum* between the second century BCE and the first century CE, see Harlow and Laurence (2002) 104–116.
- 5 Age calculated by the indication that Cato the Elder (born in 234 BCE) was a *meirakion* when Fabius Maximus took Tarent (in 209 BCE, during the second Punic War).
- 6 On women in Plutarch’s works see Le Corsu (1981), Nikolaidis (1997) and (2008), Stadter (1999), Walcot (1999), Castellani (2002), and McInerney (2003). According to Golden ((1990) 3), the author’s interest in emphasizing the differences between children and adults is a factor responsible for putting the characterization of girls on a second plane.

- 7 There were exceptions, mainly in the royal lineage. In fact, king Agesilaus II was lame (*Ages.* 2.3). Huys ((1996) 48–56) discusses the role of the elder council of Sparta in infanticide. On the exposure of babies in the Greek and Roman worlds, see Russel (1943), Patterson (1985), Harris (1994), Haentjens (2000), Corbier (2001), and Ingals (2002).
- 8 On pederasty, see Lear and Cantarella (2008), D'Ippolito (2007), Hubbard (2006), Skinner (2005) 118–124, Younger (2005) s.v. “paiderastia” and “boy-love,” Williams (1999) 63–82.
- 9 We should not forget that the barrier between being young and a young adult is very tenuous and unstable, as Pompey’s case exemplifies. Although Plutarch called him an *aner neos* (“young adult”), when Sulla became suspicious of Pompey’s independent movements while commanding the army, he attributed to him and his soldiers the designation *paides*, which could be derogatory or not (*Pomp.* 13.5). Even more deprecatory, or even false, was when Caesar called Pompey’s sons “little children” (*tois paidariois*, *Caes.* 56.2). The youngest was twenty-nine, and the oldest a little older (Stadter, in Plutarch (1999) 516 n. 346). As we read it, “even though they were young (*neos men ontas eti*),” they managed to gather a great army and, due to their bravery, deserved the position of command.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are several useful contributions on age categories: Golden (1990) 12–22; Eyben (1996) 80–82; Harlow and Laurence (2002) 15–17; Rawson (2003) 134–145. For the general opinion that children are a minor subject in Plutarch's *Lives* see Pelling (1990) and Bradley (1999). Golden's essay (1990) continues to be a reference for the study of childhood in Classical Athens. Although not considering Plutarch's writings as a reliable source of knowledge on the Roman way of thinking about childhood, Rawson (2003) offers a general view of the subject (and pays particular attention to "rearing" in ch. 2, and education in ch. 5). Also focusing on Romans (200 BCE–200 CE), Harlow and Laurence (2002) propose a different approach; they assume that relationships between young people and adults always result in bonds of dependency. The Spartan *agoge* represents a *sui generis* standard of rearing children and youths in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds and is very well discussed by Kennell (1995). Cohen and Rutter (2007) present a résumé of the bibliography on childhood and Vuolanto (2010) offers an impressive list of titles on this topic.

CHAPTER 26

Death and Other Kinds of Closure

Craig Cooper

And it came to pass as they still went on, and talked, that behold there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up in a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horseman thereof." And he saw him no more.

(2 Kings 2.11–12 KJV)

A spectacular ending to a spectacular life. The difficulty with writing a biography of Elijah is that there is no death to point to, to signal that the life had actually come to an end. There was in Jewish lore always an expectation that the prophet would someday return, and so the life could never be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. For there to be a biography, a life must at some point end, and death would seem to be the natural point of conclusion. Momigliano defines biography as “an account of a man’s life from birth to death” (Momigliano (1993) 11). According to this simple definition, the natural ending point for any life is death itself. With Plutarch, however, it is not quite so straightforward. Often an account of a life does not actually end with the death of his subject but with the death of someone else, who was intimately linked to the fate of the hero, or with a description of posthumous honors paid to the hero after his death, or with both. Since Plutarch composed not single biographies but pairs of lives, one Greek and one Roman, at the end of each pair, though not in every case, there was a *synkrisis* that concluded the parallel lives with a formal comparison.¹ Pelling (Pelling (2002b) 365–386) has provided a useful summary of the ways in which Plutarch concludes his lives, outlining the various terminal devices that the biographer employs.² As he notes (p. 366), “Plutarch has no rules for ending a Life, and he can carry on the story until it reaches several different sorts of rest.” Pelling’s article provides a good starting-point for any discussion of closure in Plutarch’s *Lives*. There is little to add in terms of a general

discussion, but it might, however, be useful to examine in some detail the deaths and closures of three pairs of lives that span the length of the collection from very early on to late in the series to see how Plutarch treats death at various points in his own life and uses various closing elements to tie together a life and bring it to a satisfying conclusion.

I begin with *Demosthenes–Cicero*, which was fifth in the *Parallel Lives* (*Dem.* 3.1). It marks a new approach in the biographical treatment of these two statesmen, who had previously been treated by earlier biographers only as literary figures and not as *politikoi* as Plutarch intended (see Cooper (2004) 39–45; cf. Stadter (1984) 359). The pair capped a series of lives devoted to generals (*Epaminondas–Scipio*, *Cimon–Lucullus*, *Pelopidas–Marcellus*, and *Sertorius–Eumenes* or *Philopoemen–Flaminius*; Jones (1966) 67–68).³ The first ten pairs of *Lives*, which began with *Epaminondas–Scipio* and concluded with *Pericles–Fabius* as tenth (*Per.* 2.5), were likely published between 96 and 114 (Stadter (1989) xxix; Stadter (1984) 358–359; Jones (1966) 69–70). Jones suggests a start date of 99 for the new undertaking, the year of the first consulship of Sosius Senecio to whom the *Parallel Lives* are dedicated (Jones (1966) 70–73). I have suggested elsewhere that *Demosthenes–Cicero* was still under preparation, though perhaps close to completion, when Plutarch composed his essay *Old Men in Public Affairs* around 110 (Cooper (2008) 73–75). In the essay (*Mor.* 783b) Plutarch refers to his own age and the attendant maladies that could easily provide him with an excuse to avoid politics, but he assures his addressee, Euphanes, that he will not abandon political life, and in words that anticipate what he would say about Demosthenes (*Dem.* 13.1), “he will abide by the choice which he made from the beginning when he made the goal of living, living honorably.” The accepted date of Plutarch’s birth *c.* 45 would mean that the biographer was in his mid-sixties when he composed the essay, and the two lives came out sometime after the essay was complete. Plutarch tells Euphanes that he has several times considered old men in politics and one obvious occasion would be his preparation of *Demosthenes–Cicero*. Significantly, both men were in their early sixties when their careers came to an end. Plutarch presents Cicero as an old man (*geron*) who was easily duped by a youthful Caesar into supporting him politically (*Cic.* 46.1). Demosthenes is presented as a bitter old man in exile, who tries to dissuade the young men who visit him from entering politics (*Dem.* 26.5). It is attractive to see the pair encapsulating some of Plutarch’s own reflections on old age and retirement.

Next I turn to *Cimon–Lucullus*, which is one of the earliest pairs, perhaps second in the series (see Jones (1966) 68; cf. Stadter (1984) 358 and (Stadter, 1989) xxviii–xxix; Pelling (1979)=(2002a) 2–11). It was probably written a decade earlier than *Demosthenes–Cicero* when Plutarch was still in his prime. Cimon and particularly Lucullus are not perfect characters, and though Plutarch makes various attempts to justify their behaviors, in the end he cannot fully redeem their characters and his concluding comments leave them still wanting. Finally I end the discussion by examining *Nicias–Crassus*, which was written late in the series toward the end of Plutarch’s life (Plutarch died *c.* 120; Jones (1966) 66). It is among a series of lives (*Demetrius–Antony*, *Alcibiades–Coriolanus*, *Agis–Cleomenes–Gracchi*, *Pyrrhus–Marius*) that are dark and pessimistic and present examples of lives that should be avoided (Zadorojnyi (1997) 172). Do these lives reflect the musings of an old man who was close to his own end and reflecting back over life and its vagaries? To determine this we will have to wait until the end of this chapter.

1. Demosthenes–Cicero

An important motif that connects the death of Demosthenes back to early episodes of his life is the theme of acting. Early in his career, we are told, Demosthenes suffered from a certain weakness of voice, indistinctness of speech, and shortness of breath that adversely affected the delivery of his speech. The sense of what he said was so disjointed when he spoke that he was regularly interrupted by the assembly and jeered off the *bema* (6.2–3). On one particular occasion, after being rebuffed by the people, as Demosthenes was wandering home dejected, he was met by the actor Satyrus to whom he complained that, though he more than any other speaker expended his energy and used up his bodily strength on his speaking, he won no favor with the people. Satyrus agreed and to demonstrate the cause of his failure he had Demosthenes recite a passage of Euripides or Sophocles. Once Demosthenes concluded, Satyrus “took up the very same speech, fashioned it in such a way and recited it with the appropriate ethos and disposition that it appeared completely different from Demosthenes’ speech. Persuaded how much form and grace were added by delivery, Demosthenes regarded of little or no value practice if one neglected the delivery and disposition of the words.” Accordingly he built a subterranean practice room, preserved down to Plutarch’s time, where he would descend every day to “fashion his delivery and work his voice” (7.1–4). The remaining chapters of this section of the life (8–11) leading up to Demosthenes’ entry into politics describe the enormous efforts that Demosthenes put into composing his speeches and refining his delivery to the point that he was criticized not only by his contemporaries, but also by later critics like Demetrius of Phalerum, who took issue with the excessive emphasis that he placed “on the tone and delivery of his words as an important means of persuasion” (11.3). The point here is that Demosthenes had become the consummate actor, who could readily discern good and bad acting, that is to say when someone was simply playing the part or was sincere.⁴ And this is a key point in the death scene.

At chapter 28 of *Demosthenes* Plutarch begins his account of Demosthenes’ death (28–31). Two other deaths are closely entwined with Demosthenes’ own, that of his associate Hyperides and that of his political enemy, Demades, whose decree was partially responsible for Demosthenes’ death. The former precedes Demosthenes; the latter follows, and the posthumous death of Demades, along with the posthumous honors paid to Demosthenes, provide a satisfying closure to the life in that Demosthenes gets his revenge by having the final say and by having charges of corruption, which had plagued him during his life, finally answered.

With Antipater’s and Craterus’ imminent approach on Athens, Demosthenes and his associates decided to steal away from the city, particularly since a sentence of death had been passed on the motion of Demades. Antipater responded by dispatching troops under the command of Archias, the so-called Exile-hunter, to track down the fugitives, who have scattered to various locations. According to Plutarch Archias hailed from Thurii; he was a tragic actor, and in one version he was the teacher of Polus of Aegina, the best actor of his time. But Hermippus, as Plutarch notes, registered him as one of the students of Lacritus the rhetor, whereas Demetrius (presumably Phalerum) recorded that he belonged to the school of Anaximenes (28.2–4). Far from being irrelevant details they add a certain poignancy to Plutarch’s account in that Archias’ training as a rhetorician and former

occupation as an actor make him a fitting instrument both for the death of Hyperides, who alone among Demosthenes' associates is called *rhetor*, and of Demosthenes, whose death scene is replete with acting imagery and turns on the question of who has played their part better, Archias or Demosthenes.

The night before his capture, Demosthenes had a dream that he was "acting in a tragedy and competing with Archias" and though he acquitted himself well, he lost "because of his lack of stage equipment and costumes" (29.2). In the encounter scene (29.1–2) Archias tried to persuade Demosthenes to leave the sanctuary of Poseidon with assurances of no harm and with many kindly expressions. Demosthenes, however, saw through the charade; he stared at Archias and responded that "he was never convinced by Archias' acting nor would he now be convinced of his promises." Archias next turned to threats, to which Demosthenes replied, "you now speak the words of the Macedonian oracle but a minute ago you were acting." After this exchange Demosthenes withdrew into the temple of Poseidon and ingested poison from his pen. As he stood there with his head covered and bent, the spearmen began to laugh "as if he were playing the part of the coward," not realizing that he had poisoned himself. By the time Archias intervened and made one final attempt at persuasion, the poison had already taken full effect. Demosthenes uncovered his head and, with steadfast eyes, taunted Archias: "You would not be too quick in playing the part of Creon in the tragedy and cast this body unburied."

Aside from the obvious allusion to Sophocles' *Antigone* the scene is full of tragic elements: the portentous dream, the oracle, the temple backdrop, pleas to leave the sanctuary of the temple, and Demosthenes' suppliant stance. In the end Demosthenes emerges as a tragic figure who, though flawed (there were charges of corruption), remained resolved until the end in his opposition to Macedonia, a decision (*prohairesis*) he made when he first entered politics and for which he is applauded by Plutarch. Fittingly, the story does not end there. What follows next in the life are accounts of posthumous honors awarded Demosthenes and the posthumous death of Demades; these accounts allow Plutarch to tie various themes together and bring the life to a satisfying end in three ways: First it reiterates what was demonstrated by Demosthenes' death, his determination to abide by his initial decision; second, it answers the criticism of corruptibility; and third, it allows Demosthenes to have the final word and with it his revenge on Demades, who, unlike Demosthenes, did change his mind. We are told that a little after Demosthenes' death the people of Athens erected a statue in his honor and decreed that the eldest of his household should have free meals at the Prytaneum. The inscription read: "If you had strength equal to your conviction (*gnómê*), never would Macedonian Ares rule Greece" (30.5). The key word in the inscription is *gnómê*, which picks up on Plutarch's initial commentary on Demosthenes' decision to enter politics (chs. 12–13). There Plutarch notes that Demosthenes chose "a noble foundation for his political activity, the defense of the Greeks against Philip" (12.3). He takes issue with Theopompus' criticism that Demosthenes was "unstable in character" and unable "to abide" by the same policies. It is clear to Plutarch that once Demosthenes, "from the beginning of his political career," settled on a faction and a position in political life, he guarded it until the end, "not only by not changing his mind (*metabalomenos*) in his lifetime but forgoing his life in order not to change (*metabalesthai*)" (13.1). He was not like Demades, who continually "apologized for his change in policy" (13.2). Reasoned choice, *prohairesis*, is a defining feature of the character of the Plutarchan hero (Wardman

(1974) 107–114; cf. Cooper (2008) 70–71). As Plutarch notes in *Timoleon* (6.1–4) and elsewhere, it must be the basis of every political action, steadfast in its conviction and not based on fleeting glory. A “change of mind” (*metanoia*), however, brings even a noble action into disgrace, whereas “choice (*prohairesis*) arising from knowledge and reasoning does not change even when the action fails.” In *Political Precepts*, Plutarch advises that underlying any political activity as a firm and strong foundation must be “choice that arises from judgment and reason” and “not from the excitement aroused by vain glory (*hypo doxēs kenēs*)” (*Mor.* 798c). A change of mind (*to metanoien*) brings disgrace on the enterprise (798d), but those who begin political life “from conviction and reasoning (*apo gnômēs kai logismo*) are not overturned in their conviction (*gnômên*)” (798e). This is true of Demosthenes’ character, and the inscription on the honorary statue reaffirms that he abided by his conviction until the end, even though his political action failed.

Next (31.1–2) Plutarch repeats a story told in his own time about Demosthenes’ statue. Shortly before he took up residence in Athens the following incident is said to have occurred: Plutarch tells how a soldier hid some gold in the hands of the statue; leaves from a nearby plane tree blew over and concealed the gold. When the soldier returned he found his store intact. As reports of the incident spread throughout the city, many came to believe in Demosthenes’ incorruptibility. Finally the life concludes with an account of Demades’ death, which is directly attributed to his desire for glory (*doxa*) and the changeability of his character. We are told by Plutarch that Demades did not long enjoy his growing reputation (*doxa*), when justice for Demosthenes brought him to Macedonia. For a letter sent by Demades to Perdiccas encouraging the latter to attack Macedonia and liberate the Greeks leaked out. Demades was denounced by Deinarchus before Cassander, who flew into a rage, killed his son and ordered Demades’ own execution. Demades, we are told, “learned among his great misfortune that traitors sell themselves first, something Demosthenes had often assured him but he did not believe.” In the end Demosthenes has the final word, but in fact he does not; Plutarch does when he concludes perfunctorily: “So Sosias, you have the life of Demosthenes from the sources which I have read about and heard of.” This is what Pelling (2002b) 367) would refer to as an “authorial intrusion.”

I have spent a good deal of space on *Demosthenes* to illustrate how integral to the life the death scene is and other closing elements that accompany it. Cicero’s *Life*, which forms the parallel, is no different. Themes that play out in the early part of the *Life*, like that of Demosthenes, are picked up in the death scene. Indecisiveness and the desire for *doxa*, which characterize Cicero’s behavior early in his life as he contemplates a career in politics, reemerge at the end of his life in the scenes leading up to his death. A series of false starts, which slowed his advance into politics, characterize his flight from Rome and one final play for *doxa* takes him down a path that ultimately leads to his death.

Initially, after his childhood, Cicero took up with Mucius Scaevola and his associates, who were politicians and leading men of the senate, who helped him in the law. Cicero, we are told, even served under Sulla against the Marians; all this would suggest a career in politics, but, when he saw the Republic hurling headlong into factions and from factions into monarchy, he turned to leisure and a contemplative life, pursuing his studies until Sulla gained control and the city seemed more settled (3.1–2). Next he turned to defending Chrysogonus, a freedman of Sulla, who had been proscribed. Cicero was encouraged by his friends to take up the case as it provided him with a brilliant

opportunity to win fame (*pros doxan*). Accordingly (*oun*), he undertook the defense, was successful, and was greatly admired (*ethaumasthê*) for it. But from fear of Sulla he instead traveled to Greece, claiming his body needed care (3.3–5). In Athens he studied with Antiochus and even considered, if he was driven out of public life, moving permanently to Athens and living his life away from the agora and politics in quiet and philosophy (4.1–2). But when word came of Sulla's death, and since he was encouraged by his friends and by Antiochus "to apply himself to politics, he once more (*authis*) began to prepare his rhetorical style as if it were an instrument (*organon*) and stir up his political power," working hard at his declamation and studying with popular rhetoricians (4.3–4). Although he was carried along, full of hopes, toward a political career, his impulse was blunted by a certain oracle. When he inquired at Delphi how he could become most famous (*endoxotatos*), the Pythia encouraged him to make his nature, not the *doxa* of the many, his guide in life (5.1). And so, we are told, for the first part of his time in Rome he was cautious, was hesitant to seek office, and was overlooked, being called "Greek" and "Scholar." But since he was naturally ambitious (*philotimos*), "he immediately shone forth in *doxa* and far surpassed those who contended in the agora" (5.2). The indecisiveness of Cicero's character is clear, particularly as he struggled between deciding to pursue philosophy or politics. In the end what won out was Cicero's overwhelming desire for *doxa*, which he imagined could only come through political life. As Plutarch notes at the end of this section of the life (6.5), Cicero's "excessive desire for praise and passion for *doxa* remained with him his whole life and many times often confounded his better judgments" (*logismôn*). Plutarch's comments here are in response to a report that left Cicero disheartened and potentially could have driven him back into a contemplative life: when he supposed that his name and *doxa* had filled all of Rome, he learned from an eminent friend in Campania that he had made no impression at all (6.4).

That overwhelming desire for *doxa*, which defined Cicero's character early on, becomes a determining factor at the end of his life that would ultimately lead to his demise. Cicero's efforts to control Octavian failed; in the end, as Plutarch remarks, "Cicero was led on and cheated, an old man by the young man" (46.1). We are told that not only was it his hatred of Antony but also his natural craving for *timê* that directed him to Octavian, believing he could add Octavian's power to his own political influence (45.1). Octavian urged Cicero to obtain the consulship for them both but control affairs himself, since all that he desired as a youth was a "name and *doxa*" (45.5), exactly what motivated Cicero in his youth to enter politics but proved so deadly for Cicero in his old age. Apparently Octavian admitted, and Plutarch repeats the story, that he used Cicero's love of power (*philarchia*) to help him sue for the consulship (45.5), but once he gained his position he discarded Cicero and made friends with Antony and Lepidus (46.2). In the end, Cicero's passion for *doxa* confounded his better judgment.

Events leading up to Cicero's death are marked by the same kind of indecisiveness that characterized Cicero's initial decision to enter politics early in his life. Once he learned of his proscription Cicero resolved to go to Astura and from there sail to Brutus in Macedonia (47.1). But once he reached Astura, though he had immediately embarked on a boat and sailed as far as Circaeum and had favorable winds to continue on from there to Greece, he disembarked and traveled on foot toward Rome (47.3). But then again (*authis*) he lost his resolve and changed his mind (*metaballomenos*), going down to the sea at Astura (47.4). There he spent the night in desperate calculations (*logismôn*),

finally resolving to sneak into Octavian's house, where he would kill himself on the hearth and place an avenging spirit on Octavian. But fear of tortures drove him from that course of action, and "turning over in his mind many confusing and contradictory plans of purpose" (that is, frequently changing his mind about what to do), in the end Cicero could do no more than entrust himself to his servants who conveyed him to Caieta (47.4). There by a temple of Apollo an omen of the crow occurred, which, much like Demosthenes' dream, portended his death (47.5–6). Betrayed by Philologus, a young freedman of his brother, whom he had educated liberally, Cicero was assassinated by the centurion Herennius, who cut off his head and hands, the very hands that had written the Philippics against Antony (48.1–4).

The parallels with Demosthenes' death are striking and are meant to be: the temple back-drop, the portent, the veiled Cicero (47.6) who, like Demosthenes, looked steadfast at his killer (48.3); but, unlike Demosthenes, he was not steadfast in his resolve but frequently changed his mind. As in the case of Demosthenes, Plutarch does not conclude the life with Cicero's death; there are a series of posthumous anecdotes that follow, which allow Cicero's death to be avenged and address a criticism raised by Plutarch earlier in the life. There are three anecdotes in the final chapter of the life: the story of how Philologus was handed over to Pomponia, Quintus' wife, to have her revenge, and a final anecdote that allows Cicero's memory to be honored (as the statue does for Demosthenes) and with it revenge to be taken upon Antony. According to that story, once Antony was defeated, Caesar (Augustus) chose Cicero's own son as his running mate in the consulship, during which the senate voted to have Antony's statues removed, his other honors repealed, and a decree passed that no Antony could bear the name of Marcus. We know that all these steps to erase the memory of Antony were taken several months earlier (Cassius Dio 51.19.3), but their placement here during the consulship of Marcus allow for a more "morally satisfying ending" (Moles (1988) 201). Plutarch's final comment sums it up nicely: "Thus the divine brought to the house of Cicero the final fulfillment of Antony's punishment."

The second anecdote in the triad, much like the story about Demosthenes' statue, is meant to address criticism raised by Plutarch earlier in the life against Cicero's education. As Swain ((1990) 195) notes, nowhere in the life does Plutarch call Cicero a philosopher, only a *rhetor* (27.1, 39.7; *Dem.* 3.4), even though we know he pursued and wrote philosophy.⁵ Rather, it is Cicero himself who insists on his friends calling him philosopher and not *rhetor*, "for he had chosen philosophy as his occupation and used oratory as an instrument (*organô*) for political ends." But as Plutarch goes on to comment critically, "*doxa* is a terrible power that washes *logos*/reason (the stuff of philosophy) from the soul, like a dye, and by association and interaction smudges the passions of the many onto those engaged in politics, unless they keep guard" (32.5). The comment at once takes us back to the early part of the life where, at the urging of his friends and his teacher Antiochus, Cicero began to prepare his rhetorical style "as if it were an instrument (*organon*) and to stir up his political power," working hard at declamation and pursuing eminent rhetoricians (4.4). It is clear from what follows (4.4–5) that all of Cicero's education was aimed only at cultivating rhetorical eloquence and not philosophical *logos*. There as here the allure of *doxa* gets the better of Cicero, and in both places Plutarch implies that Cicero's education was inadequate to resist it (Swain (1990) 196). As Plutarch notes at 2.3 of the *synkrisis*, "it is necessary for someone engaged in politics to prevail through *logos* but ignoble to admire and crave *doxa* obtained from *logos*." This is Cicero's

failing and for this reason he is regarded by Plutarch as a *rhetor* rather than a philosopher. Plutarch's criticism, however, is softened at the end of the life. He reports the story of how Augustus had found one of his grandsons reading a book by Cicero; terrified, the boy tried to hide it, but Augustus took it from him and, after reading a large portion, commented, "a learned (*logios*) man and a lover of his country." The anecdote to some extent mutes Plutarch's earlier criticism, much as the story of the soldier and the statue is meant to mute criticism about Demosthenes' corruptibility.

2. Cimon–Lucullus

I have spent considerable time examining *Demosthenes–Cicero* as they show how integral to the *Lives* are the closing scenes. In each case they link back thematically to a central theme explored earlier in the life by Plutarch; they confirm the constancy of the hero's choice and character, which in most cases does not change (Wardman (1974) 106–115). Attempts by Plutarch to avenge the hero's death and smooth over the flaws in his character reveal Plutarch's sympathetic and human engagement as a biographer. The *Demosthenes–Cicero* pair was written fifth in the series (*Dem.* 3.1), after Plutarch had been at the task of writing the parallel lives for some time and by which time his biographical approach had matured, but the humane engagement with his subjects that we see so clearly in *Demosthenes–Cicero* seems to have characterized Plutarch's approach from the very outset. In the preface to *Cimon–Lucullus*, which was one of the earliest pairs in the *Parallel Lives*, Plutarch uses the image of the painter to describe his biographical approach (cf. *Alex.* 1.13 and Duff (1999) 16–17, 42–43):

As with those who paint fine objects (*ta kala*) that possess much grace, if there is a small imperfection present, we demand of them [the painters] neither to gloss over this completely nor to be too precise. For the one makes the portrait ugly, whereas the other dissimilar to the original. In the same way, since it is difficult and perhaps even impossible to display a man's life as blameless and pure, in the fine aspects (*tois kalois*) we must fill out the truth as a true likeness. But errors and follies which arise from some passion or political necessity and assail a man's political deeds, we must consider them the shortcomings of some virtue rather than the villainous actions of wickedness, and we must not be overly zealous to point them out in our history and superfluously at that, but as it were feeling kind regard for human nature (*physis*), should it produce a character (*ethos*) that is not absolutely fine (*kalon*) nor indisputably inclined to virtue. (*Cim.* 3.5)⁶

Kind regard seems to be Plutarch's approach to the lives of Demosthenes and Cicero, particularly his sympathetic treatment of their last days. Though Plutarch's comment can apply to Cimon (there were after all unsavory rumors about his relations with his sister and criticism by contemporaries about his education), it is meant for Lucullus, whose character changes dramatically toward the end of the life and cannot in any way be recovered in death. This places Plutarch in a dilemma and his disquiet at the turn of events is obvious at times. At 39.1 he compares the life of Lucullus to that of a comedy; in the first half one reads about political measures and commands (*strategias*), and in the second half about drinking bouts, dinners, revels, torch races, and all kinds of frivolity, which is how he characterizes Lucullus' costly buildings, walkways, bath, paintings, and statues.

His extravagance was such that Tubero, the Stoic philosopher, called Lucullus the “toga-wearing Xerxes” (39.3). His daily dinners were those of the nouveaux riches (40.1). So extravagant were his ways that Greeks who had come to Rome and been entertained on successive days, with their genuinely Hellenic feelings (*Hellenikon ti pathontas*), were ashamed to accept his invitation (41.1). He used his wealth, we are told, “hubristically as if it were truly a Barbarian prisoner of war” (41.6). A certain barbarism had crept over Lucullus in his retirement and old age, which is ironic, given that the first point of comparison made by Plutarch between Cimon and Lucullus is that both were men of war who had performed brilliant exploits against the Barbarians (*Cim.* 3.1). As Swain points out ((1992b) 307), two key features of Plutarch’s characterization of Lucullus are his Hellenic culture and his benefactions to Greece; the latter is what sparked Plutarch’s initial interest to explore Lucullus’ life (*Cim.* 1–2), and the first half of the life describes his various activities that benefited the Greeks (see Swain (1992b) 309–312). The life of Lucullus, however, is complicated as features of his character that Plutarch clearly admires – liberal education aimed at *to kalon*, philosophical pursuits that temper his ambition (1.4–5), affection for his brother (1.6), constancy and mildness (2.1) – are betrayed by his behavior not only at the end of his life, but even at times over the course of the first half of his life (see Lavery (1994) 261–273; contrast Swain (1992b) 316).

By contrast, the *Life of Cimon* is rather simple and straightforward (it is certainly among the shortest *Lives*) and ends bluntly: “such was the Hellenic leader” (19.4). Cimon dies as a leader commanding the siege of Citium (19.1), and it is precisely on this point that the comparison matters most for Plutarch. When searching around for someone with whom he could compare Lucullus, he hit upon Cimon as “both were men of war and were brilliant against the Barbarians ... and no Hellene before Cimon and no Roman before Lucullus carried the wars further” (*Cim.* 3.1–2). The life of Cimon concludes (19.2–4) with a posthumous reference to Agesilaus that underscores the extent of Cimon’s exploits (see Pelling (2002b) 371–372) and a discussion of two monuments commemorating Cimon: the Cimonion, which is taken as evidence by Plutarch that Cimon’s remains were brought back to Athens for burial (as Cimon had done with the bones of Theseus), and a report by the rhetorician Nausicrates who claimed that people of Citium, in response to an oracle, honored Cimon’s tomb in their own city. Lucullus, on the other hand, died not as a commander in battle but as a senile old man. Cornelius Nepos attributes his loss of mind not to old age or disease but to drugs administered by Callisthenes, Lucullus’ freedman; their effect was not to win Lucullus’ affection as Callisthenes intended but to overwhelm his reason (*ton logismon*) to the point that his brother had to manage his property (43.1–2). There is no stately burial to commemorate his military and political exploits in the Campus Martius, but a private one in his villa in Tusculum at the bequest and insistence of Lucullus’ brother, who did not survive him long: “but as in age and reputation (*doxa*) he was left behind a little, so also at the time of death, having been a most affectionate brother.” This concluding comment reaffirms one of Lucullus’ positive qualities, his affection toward his younger brother (1.6), which is now repaid in full. But what is left unaddressed is the character of the commander, which as we noted is the important point of comparison for Plutarch. Here we must wait for the *synkrisis*.

In the *synkrisis* the human touch is gone and Plutarch becomes more pointed and direct in his comments. The greatest point of comparison, he notes, between Lucullus

and Cimon is that both men left their country still free. Cimon, “however, died in the field (*epi stratopedou*), while campaigning (*stratêgôn*), not worn out nor wandering in his mind, nor making feasting and drinking bouts a prize for arms, campaigns (*stratêgiôn*) and trophies” (1.2). Though leisure and quiet and the pursuit of philosophical speculation, Plutarch tells us (1.3), “are fitting diversions for an old man, who has retired from wars and politics, to overturn these fine accomplishments (*tas kalas praxeis*) for pleasure as an end in itself and in wanton sport lead the army of Aphrodite (*agonta Aphrodisia*) as the remnant of wars and campaigns (*stratêgiôn*)” is not fitting of a follower of the Academy, as Lucullus clearly was (see 42.2–3). What Plutarch finds astonishing is that the opposite was true of Cimon. Whereas Cimon seemed blameworthy and unrestrained as a youth, Lucullus was disciplined and self-controlled (1.4). At a loss, Plutarch can only comment that “better is the man in whom the change (*metabolê*) is for the better, for more beneficial is the nature in which the worse dies and better blossoms” (1.4). At all other points of comparison in this chapter (1.5–7), and again in chapter 2 (but contrast chapter 3), Lucullus comes off the worse and Plutarch is left to surmise that had Cimon lived long enough to retire from politics and campaigns and enter an old age free of war and politicking, he might have led a more indulgent life. If, on the other hand, Lucullus had died fighting and campaigning, not even the most censorious person could bring an accusation against him (1.7). In the end Plutarch cannot redeem his character, though he tries to mitigate the extent of his faults by suggesting that Cimon may have suffered the same deterioration as Lucullus, had he lived longer.

3. Nicias–Crassus

Nicias–Crassus comes late in the collection and represents Plutarch as a mature biographer toward the end of his literary career and life. It is part of the late series of lives (that include *Demetrius–Antony*, *Alcibiades–Coriolanus*, *Agis–Cleomenes–Gracchi*, *Pyrrhus–Marius*) that provide examples of lives that should be avoided (Zadorojnyi (1997) 172). Nicias is a curious life in that it reads more like a historical monograph than a biography (Cooper (2004) 38–39). The focus of the life is on the Sicilian expedition. Almost two-thirds of the *Life* is devoted to this event (Wardman (1974) 155), little on earlier political events in Nicias’ life and nothing on his origins, childhood, and upbringing, as we typically find in other lives (Leo (1901) 180–182 for typical biographical schema; cf. Stadter (1989) xxxiv–xxxv; Geiger (1988) 250–251). Instead at the beginning of the life we have a character sketch of Nicias the *politikos*, which emphasizes the piety and timidity of his character. The point here is that the Sicilian affair defines who Nicias was. In like fashion, the life of Crassus is similarly skewed: over half the life (16–33) involves a narrative of his defeat at the hand of the Parthians at Carrhae. Other events of his life are either overlooked or condensed (Braund (1993) 468). There may have been practical reasons for this, as these events were treated more fully in the Roman lives of Crassus’ contemporaries that were prepared simultaneously with *Crassus* (Braund (1993) 476; for simultaneous production of *Pompey*, *Caesar*, *Cato Minor*, *Antony*, *Crassus*, and *Brutus*, see Pelling ((1979)=(2002a) 2–11), but this uneven treatment allowed Plutarch to focus on the obvious point of comparison between Nicias and Crassus: the Sicilian and Parthian disasters (*Nic.* 1.1).

Tragedy plays a key element that links the two death scenes of the pair together. When Nicias was captured he assumed the posture of a suppliant and pleaded with Gylippus to have pity on the rest of the Athenians (27.4). At a general assembly of the Syracusans, Eurycles passed a motion to have the day on which Nicias was captured declared holy and a festival established called Asinaria after the River Asinarus, where the Athenians had been captured, a kind of perverse honor for Nicias' piety (28.1–2). Though Gylippus demanded the Athenian generals as his prize, he was thoroughly rebuffed by the Syracusans, who had become "hubristic by their good fortunes" (28.3). We are told by Plutarch that Timaeus denied that Demosthenes and Nicias were put to death on the orders of the Syracusans, as Philistus and Thucydides maintained, but committed suicide when word came from Hermocrates of the assembly's decision. "However, their bodies were cast out of the doors in plain view for all who wanted a spectacle," a kind of tragic *ekkyklema* to satisfy the Syracusan inclination for tragedy (28.4).⁷ We are told in the next chapter that the Sicilians had a passion for Euripides. As a result some Athenians were released from slavery by reciting portions of Euripides' works, whereas others who had evaded capture were given food and drink in return for singing some of his choral hymns (29.2–3). The mention of Euripides foreshadows the death of Crassus, who emerges as a Pentheus-like figure (Braund (1993); Zadorojnyi (1997) 171, 174) and helps to link the fates of the two figures more closely together (Braund (1993) 469; Zadorojnyi (1997) 180). As Braund has shown, the development of events leading to the Carrhae, along with Crassus' capture and death, broadly conform to the *Bacchae* and present Crassus as a Pentheus (Braund (1993) 471–473; cf. Zadorojnyi (1997) 174), who like his tragic counterpart is decapitated. The Parthian Surenas emerges as Dionysius, an effeminate figure who by treachery defeats Crassus (Zadorojnyi (1997) 175–176). In the final scene of the life, as Braund puts it, "drama and narrative at last come together explicitly" as the tragic actor Jason of Tralles, while holding the head of Crassus, sang the aria of Agave to the Parthian banqueters. When he came to the line in the dialogue with the chorus and uttered the question "who slew him," Pomaxathres sprang to his feet and grabbed the head of Crassus, claiming it is more appropriate for him than the actor to speak these words, as he had killed him. For this he was awarded by the Parthian king. At that Plutarch comments: "with such an exodus (*exodion*), the campaign of Crassus ended as a tragedy" (33.4).

The *Life* does not actually end here, as Plutarch goes on to describe the punishment of Hyrodes, the Parthian king, and Surena: the former was punished for his cruelty and the latter for his treachery (33.5). In an extended *synkrisis*, Plutarch compares the two men; neither one emerges as clearly better than the other. Nicias acquired his wealth in a more blameless manner than Crassus (1.1) and was more public spirited in how he spent it (1.4). Whereas Crassus was violent and tyrannical in his political actions, Nicias was timid and cowardly (2.3). Nicias' subservience to the baser elements of society, according to Plutarch, deserves the greatest form of censure, while Crassus was lofty and high-minded, as he contended not against the likes of Cleon and Hyperbolus but against Pompey and Caesar (2.3). Although Nicias gave way to the base and surrendered his commands to those who were no commanders at all (3.1), Crassus should not be commended for the speed with which he pressed the war against Spartacus (3.2). In terms of undertaking their respective expeditions, there is more grounds for praising Nicias than for blaming Crassus; the former regarded the Sicilian expedition beyond his

power; the latter mistakenly believed the Parthian war would be an easy undertaking (4.1). In the end, however, Crassus was less blameworthy than Nicias as he did not surrender himself but gave in to the pleas of his friends and was deceived by his enemies, whereas Nicias surrendered to his enemies in the hopes of winning a shameful and inglorious safety, making his death all the more shameful (5.2). By the end of the *synkrisis*, there is some redemption for Crassus, perhaps not much, but at least a little.

As we have tried to show through the examination of three pairs of lives that span the length of the collection, death scenes and other closing vignettes are important for understanding the lives as a whole. Always present in these scenes is a degree of human engagement on the part of Plutarch with the subjects of his biographies. It is here that Plutarch tries to give a broader sense of the life lived: heroes do not always live up to expectations (Lucullus); some are fortunate to die before the stature of their character has deteriorated (Cimon); behavior that compelled a hero into politics does not always serve him well at the end of his life (Cicero); in adversity some remain steadfast, and the constancy of their character in the face of death can overshadow their weaknesses in life (Demosthenes); even in tragedy, after all is said and done, there is some redemption for the hero (Crassus). The *Lives* are the product of a mature Plutarch, who had long studied philosophy, reflected on life, and wrote numerous moral essays. Morality is still present in the *Lives* but balanced by a degree of sympathy for human fragility. Curiously Crassus, whose greed led him on a reckless campaign that ended in his tragic death, draws more sympathy from Plutarch than Lucullus, who had achieved so much only to squander it in old age. But this may reflect where the biographer himself was at, at the time of writing *Crassus*, in the closing years of his own life.

NOTES

- 1 There are four pairs (*Phocion–Cato Minor*, *Themistocles–Camillus*, *Pyrrhus–Marius*, *Alexander–Caesar*) that do not have a formal *synkrisis*. See Pelling (2002b) 377. For a discussion of the *synkrisis* see Erbse (1956); Pelling (1986) = (2002a) 349–364; Swain (1992a) 101–111; Duff (1999) 252–286.
- 2 These include “authorial intrusion,” which can be a “self-referential transition” or “self-characterization”; “parade of scholarship”; “summarizing vignette”; “modifying vignette”; “posthumous revenge”; descendants and posthumous honors.
- 3 On the relative chronology of the *Parallel Lives* see Mewaldt (1907); Stoltz (1929); Jones (1966); Cooper (2008) 72–77; Verdegem (2008) 172–176.
- 4 This is the point behind the anecdote that Plutarch relates at 11.3 as a way of prefacing Demetrius’ criticism. According to the story a man came to Demosthenes requiring his services as an advocate and related how he had been assaulted and beaten. Demosthenes responded by saying that the man suffered none of the hurt he related. To which the man raised his voice and shouted, “no hurts, Demosthenes.” Demosthenes replied: “‘Now I hear the voice of a man who is wronged and has suffered.’ So important did he regard the tone and delivery of the words as a means of persuasion. Accordingly, his delivery was wondrously pleasing to the masses, but men of refinement, like Demetrius of Phalerum, regarded his affection as low, ignoble, weak.” On Plutarch’s view of tragedy, which is not positive, see De Lacey (1952) 152–171; Mossman (1988).

- 5 As Swain ((1990) 195) points out, Plutarch says very little about Cicero's activity as a philosopher (40.2 and *Comp.* 1.3 only), which may be due to his unfamiliarity with Cicero's works; cf. Swain (1990) 195–196 n. 10.
- 6 On the relationship between *physis*, with which a person is born and does not change, and *ethos*/character, which can be shaped through habit and education, see *Mar.* 2.1–2 and Duff (1999) 74. On character change in Plutarch see Gill (1983) and Swain (1989).
- 7 There is one posthumous reminder of Nicias' demise which Plutarch himself had learned about and reports at the end of chapter 28: allegedly the shield of Nicias lay among the treasures of one particular temple in Syracuse.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A good starting-point is Pelling (2002b) 365–386, who provides a summary of the ways in which Plutarch concludes his lives, including various terminal devices that he employs. For a discussion of the *synkrisis* as a formal device to conclude Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, see Erbse (1956); Pelling (1986) = (2002a) 249–364; Swain (1992a); and Duff (1999) 252–286. For those interested in the relative chronology of Plutarch's *Lives*, consult Mewaldt (1907); Stoltz (1929); Jones (1966); and Verdegem (2008) 172–176. For a treatment of aspects of the individual lives discussed in this chapter, see Cooper (2004) 39–45 for *Demosthenes*; Moles (1988) and Swain (1990) for *Cicero*; for *Cimon* see Pelling (2002b) 371–376; and for *Lucullus* see Lavery (1994); Swain (1992b); and Pelling (2002b) 371–376; finally, for *Nicias* see Cooper (2004) 37–39; and for *Crassus* Braund (1993) and Zadorojnyi (1997). Each one of these authors provides further bibliography to pursue.

CHAPTER 27

The *Synkrisis*

David H.J. Larmour

All but four of Plutarch's pairs of *Parallel Lives* end with a formal comparison of the two heroes in terms of their virtues and failings and this comparison is conventionally known as the *synkrisis*, from the Greek meaning "judge side by side" or "compare." It is used especially of comparing individuals or entities with regard to differences. In any pair of *Parallel Lives*, however, the process of comparison and paralleling is at work on many different levels and the term *synkrisis* can also be used more generally to describe this phenomenon, as opposed to the "formal" *synkrisis* that comes at the end of the second *Life*. Here, although the focus will be primarily on the formal *synkrisis*, we shall also consider this broader aspect of Plutarch's comparative method. As we shall see, it is most helpful to view the formal *synkrisis* as a rhetorical exercise arising from the strategy of "compare and contrast" that underpins the project of the *Parallel Lives*.

Opinions about the quality and relevance of the concluding comparisons have varied considerably over time, with much depending upon how one reads the *Parallel Lives* and what one believes their purpose to be. Classical scholars have often disparaged the *synkriseis* as inferior excrescences tacked on to the end of a pair of *Lives* or complained about their lack of relevance to the events and actions, or even to the characterization of the heroes as they have been presented in the preceding narratives. Thus, for instance, in the *Cicero and Demosthenes synkrisis* J.L. Moles ((1988) 25) notes serious weaknesses in its crude and explicit simplicity and finds that it "contrasts poorly with the ambiguities and complexities of the Cicero narrative, so that Plutarch's last words on the subject seem disappointingly trite." He is far from alone in such views. Speaking of the *Pericles and Fabius* comparison, P.A. Stadter ((1989) xxxii) finds that "it reviews in a rather pedestrian manner some of the differences between the two men" and that "Plutarch's muse seems to leave him here." Indeed any contemporary reader is likely to be struck by the simplistic nature of the observations and the workmanlike level of the

argumentation. Such readers must, however, ask themselves to what extent their expectations have been conditioned by the genre of modern biography, a form to which Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* are only distantly related. These *synkriseis* are, after all, crafted by the same intellect that composed not only the *Lives* themselves but also such elaborate texts as *On the Genius of Socrates* and many others of a sophisticated philosophical character. Others have certainly appreciated them for what they regard as their artistic and philosophical merits: Michel de Montaigne, for example, opined that the comparisons constituted the "most admirable part" of Plutarch's work, remarkable for their sincerity of judgment and their profundity (*Essays*, 2.32). Such praise might be expected from an enthusiastic admirer of Plutarch and from an author much given to imitation of the digressive and moralizing mode of the *Lives* in his own compositions, but it does hint at a different way of looking at the formal comparisons. The importance of paying attention to the *synkrisis* as a significant element in Plutarch's scheme of parallelism was convincingly demonstrated by H. Erbse in his seminal article of 1956 and restated by D.A. Russell in his 1972 monograph: while admitting that the *synkriseis* "do not make very attractive reading" and "add little to information contained in the narrative" (110), he nonetheless finds them "an essential part of the plan of 'parallels'" (113). In his discussion of the Sertorius and Eumenes *synkrisis*, C.F. Conrad ((1994) xxxi–xxxii) observes that it "at first presents the usual artificialities of contrast, then moves on to more substantial observations," particularly with regard to military experience, fondness for (or dislike of) war, and greed versus frugality. In the scholarship of the last twenty years or so, it is reasonable to say that, while criticism of the *synkriseis* for their uninspiring shallowness and questionable relevance has not entirely abated, a consensus has emerged that they at least deserve much closer scrutiny, especially for our understanding of how the *Parallel Lives* are constructed and how Plutarch invites his readers to consider the ways in which a particular virtue – such as courage or mildness – is defined in both theory and practice.

The *Parallel Lives* themselves, of course, are a most unusual production, with the *synkrisis* being just one especially striking peculiarity of the overall design. Lamberton observes that "the decidedly idiosyncratic project of the *Parallel Lives* represents a distinct phase in the evolving process of cultural accommodation that made it possible for Greeks and Romans to coexist in a world where the imbalance of military, economic, and political power was so great" ((2001) 61) and, further, that these pairings constitute "the principal document in the high empire's reinvention of Classical Greece" (64). As for the *synkriseis*, he describes them as "the glue, the equals sign in the equation" and observes that "factitious though they may be, they allow the massive juxtaposition to stand, asserting a parallelism that exists only as a function of Plutarch's idiosyncratic imagination" (65).

It is indeed true that the *Parallel Lives* as a whole, and the *synkriseis* in particular, are intimately connected with Plutarch's lived experience as a Greek intellectual within the confines of the Roman Empire. There has been plenty of speculation about his motives, such as whether he wished to interpret Roman history through a Hellenic lens and to apply Greek moral and philosophical standards to the Roman equivalents of Alexander or Demosthenes or Solon, and thereby offer a "response to Roman power, a statement of resistance" (Duff (1999) 287–309) or whether we should read into the *Parallel Lives* a sincere, if occasionally critical, appreciation of the achievements of Rome. C.P. Jones regards the *Parallel Lives* as written by a man "interested in Roman history and

sympathetic to Rome,” although he detects no significant “diplomatic purpose” in the project and says Plutarch “did not write to bridge a gap between Greeks and Romans, because in his society there was none” ((1971) 103, 106–107). Scholars have differed quite widely in their opinions on these matters and Plutarch is certainly too sophisticated an author to wear his colors on his sleeve, so to speak. We might reasonably conclude that, as a writer and public figure rooted in the Greek cultural tradition but with more than a passing familiarity with the Roman world and its cultural tradition, as well as a zealous commitment to historical inquiry and research, Plutarch was supremely well positioned to undertake a venture into this novel intellectual territory of comparative history and biography. It is worth remembering, moreover, what might be termed the “synkritic” urge has a long history in Greek literature and culture. At its root, we may associate it with the central role of the *agon* in Greek social interaction and literary genres, visible in athletic contests and singing competitions between choruses, as well as in such phenomena as the juxtaposing of speeches in epic and drama or the rivalry between successive generations of lyric poets as they contend with both their contemporaries and their predecessors for control of the poetic tradition. The tradition of argumentative rhetoric and disputing cases and causes in the political and judicial arenas is often reflected in Plutarch’s choice of metaphors and he speaks in the *synkrisis* of giving his “vote” to one figure or the other. The popular agonistic forms of philosophical debate, such as the dialogue and the diatribe, would also have been well known to Plutarch. The tendency to see the world in terms of binary opposites – Greek versus non-Greek, male versus female, human versus divine, and so on – and the structuring polarities of the Presocratic philosophers have also been adduced as relevant background to the *Parallel Lives* (Duff (1999) 243–250).

By the time Plutarch was writing, he had access to a long series of rhetorical handbooks and treatises in which the benefits of the device of *synkrisis* and the various means of its deployment had been exhaustively delineated (Focke (1923); Swain (1992) 101–102). Prominent among the rhetoricians who stand behind Plutarch’s particular use of comparison are such figures as the fifth-century orator Antiphon and Plutarch’s rough contemporary, Aelius Theon of Alexandria, whose *Progymnasmata* treated the principle of comparison both within the narrow framework of praising two individuals and in a more wide-ranging sense. Plutarch’s formal *synkriseis* resemble rhetorical exercises of the kind which Quintilian, who appears to have drawn upon Theon’s work, recommends – “practicing the comparison of the respective merits of two characters ... this deals not only with the nature of virtues and vices but also with their degree (*modus*)” (2.4.21). Aristotle, who appears to endorse using *synkrisis* after the fashion of Isocrates when writing an encomium (*Rh.* 1368a19–25), suggests that “one should make the comparison with famous people, for the subject is amplified and made honorable if he is better than other worthy men”; Isocrates in his *Encomium of Helen* had made an extended comparison between Theseus and Heracles and in his *Panegyricus* another between Athens and Sparta. Scardigli ((1995) 10–11) points out that the kind of comparison we find in Plutarch was largely derived from Aristotle and what we find among his successors, especially in collections of *Lives* of individuals of historical or philosophical importance, but notes that Plutarch goes beyond Peripatetic theory, which “could not yet conceive of comparison between a Greek and a foreign figure: a barbarian could not have counted as an equal partner” (10–11). The *Parallel*

Lives thus are clearly a product of Plutarch's time, an era of an emerging Greco-Roman subject position, but also one of his own ingenuity and work of self-formation, for not all Greek writers of his day followed him down this path; as Scardigli points out with regard to the *Lives*, "the parallels are more important to him than the contrasts: they indeed reflect a basic feature of his mentality." A well-developed synkritic urge is certainly evident in other parts of the Plutarchan corpus, including *On the Fortune or Virtue of the Romans*, *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, and *Which are Cleverer – Land or Sea Animals?* From assessing these examples, we can say that Plutarch uses comparison primarily as a means of inviting readers to raise questions and to make their own evaluations, rather than offering any definitive judgment himself. This is very much in line with the way he treats multiple sources in the *Parallel Lives* and elsewhere, often citing several different versions of a particular event without too obviously privileging one over the other: for example, in the *Theseus* he gives four different reasons as to why the hero left Ariadne (*Thes.* 20) and in the *Themistocles* offers conflicting reports about the subject's parentage and social status (*Them.* 1).

The comparative project of the *Parallel Lives* thus emerges from Plutarch's preoccupation with the principle of *synkrisis* against the background of a broadly agonistic cultural tradition and from his personal interest in examining the Greeks and the Romans through the same lens – something we can see in nascent form, for example, in his *Greek Questions* and *Roman Questions*, *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Sayings of Romans*, and *Sayings of Spartans*, where some comparison between the two cultures is definitely implied. Certainly nothing like the *Parallel Lives* had been attempted by historians or biographers before, at least not on this scale and on this level of sophistication. There is a prodigious amount of research underpinning the narratives; indeed, it is the copiousness of the source material gathered that allows Plutarch to construct convincingly "parallel" *Lives* through selection (and exclusion) and other narratological tools. While we can detect similar synkritic tendencies in Isocrates' *Evagoras* or Xenophon's *Agesilaus*, the closest analogue are the Latin works of Cornelius Nepos, who wrote *Lives* of famous Romans and non-Romans in some form of parallel structure, probably a much less developed one than Plutarch's (Geiger (1981)). Plutarch goes much further and creates a new, tripartite form of historico-biographical narrative, one that calls attention to its divergence from a chronologically or geographically focused grand narrative through its most idiosyncratic features: the elaboration of an individual *Life* through a succession of anecdotes, the pairing of a Greek *Life* with a Roman, and the concluding *synkrisis* that begins, not ends, the process of comparison between the two in moral and philosophical terms. This tripartite form is, on the one hand, unified and concluded by the formal comparison at the end, yet, on the other hand, remains curiously "open-ended" because of the lack of satisfying closure provided in most cases by the *synkrisis*. It is perhaps this ambiguity that is the cause not only of some scholarly dissatisfaction with Plutarch but also of the fascination he continues to exert among his readers.

Although we do not have a clear programmatic statement of Plutarch's purpose in writing the *Parallel Lives* (one was perhaps included in the lost *Epaminondas and Scipio*, usually thought to have been the first pair in the series), we do have his words at the opening of his treatise *On the Bravery of Women*, that the best way to learn about the similarities and differences between women's and men's virtue is by "setting lives beside lives and deeds beside deeds, like great works of art, and considering whether ... the high spirit of

Porcia has the same character and pattern as that of Brutus, or Pelopidas' the same as Timocleia's, with regard to the most important points of identity and influence." This is so because the virtues manifest themselves differently in different individuals – "for Achilles is brave in one way, Ajax in another" (243b–c). The point of such *synkrisis* is not, as Plutarch makes clear, "to create many different braveries" but to bring the reader to a better understanding of what traits and actions actually constitute bravery, since, as he remarks earlier (243a), "a man's and a woman's bravery is one and the same." This is precisely the purpose of the *Parallel Lives*, whose Greek and Roman settings are just as distinct as the realms of women and men are presumed to be in the treatise. As Jones puts it: "to study virtue in action, it was useful to observe two examples in different contexts: the observer could then distinguish what was essential to each virtue from what was accidental. A Greek and a Roman paired together made a particularly rewarding subject, since the difference of their backgrounds ensured a clear view of the virtue which they had in common" ((1971) 106).

The necessity of reading pairs of *Parallel Lives* together, rather than as individual biographies, and of paying due attention to the *synkrisis* that rounds off the pair, was first articulated at length by Erbse (1956). Through an analysis of the *Dion and Brutus* and the *Demosthenes and Cicero* pairs, he shows that the main themes of one *Life* are oftengreatly influenced by its pair, when it comes to the selection, presentation, and interpretation of material. Thus, the principle of *synkrisis* can be perceived at work not only in the formal prologue and comparison, but also in the composition as a whole. Erbse's position has been restated by various scholars in studies of numerous pairs of *Lives*: Stadter (1975), for example, treats the *Pericles and Fabius Maximus* pair, which he argues, in spite of the obvious differences between the two figures and the "radically different" structure of the two narratives, is unified by many similarities drawn out by Plutarch: nicknames ("Olympios" and "Little Sheep") suggestive of a calm and dignified self-control, the practice of one-man rule, highly developed oratorical skills, a marked lack of superstition, and the like. Above all, Pericles and Fabius are united in Plutarch's retelling by one overwhelming similarity, "their ability to endure the stupidities of the mass of common citizens and their own colleagues, that is the virtue of *praiotes*." Both men are portrayed as individuals who can control themselves and hence can steer the ship of state through choppy waters. Stadter concludes as follows about Plutarch's methodology: "the concept of comparison was ever present in his selection of incident and anecdote, as well as in the overall development of the lives ... One life strengthens and explains the other, as we understand one hero by comparison with the other. The two lives were written as a unit, and the reader – whether historian, student of biography, or amateur – should never forget the fact" ((1975)=(1995) 163–164). Other scholars who make the same point include Larmour (1988) on the *Theseus and Romulus* and (1992) on *Themistocles and Camillus*; Pelling (1988) on *Demetrius and Antony*; Swain (1988) on *Philopoemen and Flamininus* and (1989) on *Aemilius and Timoleon*; and Duff (1999) on numerous pairs, especially *Pyrrhus and Marius*, *Phocion and Cato Minor*, *Lysander and Sulla*, and *Coriolanus and Alcibiades*. Sometimes the links between a pair are subtle and suggestive; for example in the *Demetrius and Antony*, in addition to the similar qualities each man possessed outlined in the prologue (they liked sex, drinking, soldiering, and were generous, extravagant, and hubristic) and the related exploration of the differences in the concluding comparison, the two *Lives* are bound together by threads of imagery drawn from the theater as well as by a sequence of maritime tableaux.

In the *Theseus and Romulus*, references to Heracles and the Delphic Oracle in both *Lives* bind the pair together, as does a network of references to Achilles, Troy, and Odysseus in the *Themistocles and Camillus* (Pelling (1988) 21–22; Larmour (1988) 362–364 and (1992) 4198–4199).

Although the order of a Greek *Life* followed by a Roman one is occasionally reversed (as with *Aemilius and Timoleon* or *Sertorius and Eumenes*), Pelling makes the point that two *Lives* usually “show a continuous technique” and that while all Plutarch’s heroes are individuals, “still the first *Life* often reflects an important *normal* pattern, the second exploits it with an interesting variation” ((1988) 22–24). Thus, the experience of the reader encountering the second *Life* is enriched by recalling details, incidents, and themes from the first and the first subject is (re)interpreted by encountering the second. This ensures that by the time the formal *synkrisis* is reached, the reader has already been comprehensively schooled in the skill of recognizing parallels, both thematic and circumstantial, between the two subjects’ *Lives*. By separating a particular *Life* from its partner and marginalizing the formal *synkrisis* (as often happens when collections of Roman or Greek *Lives* are published separately or one *Life* is studied in isolation), one risks failing to discern the intricacy of Plutarch’s design and even misinterpreting how he presents certain episodes or judges a figure’s actions. It is, in fact, methodologically dangerous to extract an account of a particular incident from one *Life* and use it to mine reliable information on a historical figure or event without scrutinizing the parallel *Life* and the formal *synkrisis*. The two *Lives* in a pair stand in obvious metonymic relationship to each other but the system of parallels and the formal comparison (i.e. *synkrisis* in both the broad and the narrow sense) bring them into a complex metaphorical relationship, drawing together the two domains of Greek and Roman history (Larmour (2000) 277–279). Scholars have also paid attention to the phenomenon of “internal *synkrisis*,” by which is meant how within one *Life* Plutarch makes explicit cross-references to another from the same Greek or Roman cultural milieu and therefore outside the formal juxtapositioning of Greek and Roman *Lives*. H. Beck (2002) finds particularly striking examples at work in the *Fabius* and *Marcellus*, where, surprisingly perhaps, it is Marcellus, that notorious looter of Greek statues from Syracuse, rather than the more temperate Fabius (who had the decency to leave some behind after his conquest of Tarentum), who is made to assume the role of mediator of Hellenism to the Romans. Through a series of glancing cross-references between the two *Lives*, Plutarch contrives to portray Marcellus as outperforming Fabius in *philanthropia* and as a model of Roman conversion to Greek learning. Although it is important to remember that ancient books did not allow for cross-reading as easily as modern texts do, the presence of such moments of internal *synkrisis* serves to underline the finely crafted nature of Plutarch’s *Lives* and their pervasive interest in the problematic and multifaceted interaction between Greeks and Romans.

Most pairs of *Parallel Lives* end with a formal *synkrisis*, the exceptions being *Themistocles and Camillus*, *Pyrrhus and Marius*, *Phocion and Cato Minor*, and *Alexander and Caesar*. In these four cases, we have to assume that the *synkrisis* was lost or that, for some reason as yet opaque, Plutarch simply opted not to include one. The matter is far from settled, but the prevalence of scholarly opinion currently favors the theory that they were lost in transmission (Erbse (1956); Duff (1999) 254–255). In these cases, it is possible to hazard a guess at what a formal *synkrisis* might have contained: for the *Pyrrhus and Marius*, although we have neither a *synkrisis* nor a recognizable prologue, Duff finds a “clear and

largely unproblematic message” to the effect that happiness consists in being contented with what one has rather than in striving to attain more, and sees at the core of both *Lives* in the pair “the theme of discontent with present blessings, a discontent which leads to greed and immoderate hopes for the future, and in the cases of Marius and Pyrrhus, to an inability to cease from warfare” ((1999) 103). In the case of the *Themistocles and Camillus*, the *synkrisis* would presumably have been constructed upon the main similarities between the two heroes (undistinguished backgrounds, military success in saving their native cities from invasion, unpopularity and exile in later life, and so on), perhaps incorporating themes of rivalry, deceit, reconciliation, and restraint that seem to be emphasized in the narrative (Larmour (1992)). It is also possible to come up with reasons why Plutarch may have chosen not to compose a *synkrisis*: the rather unusually reflective passage in *Marius* 46.1–5, relevant to both Marius and Pyrrhus (and critical of both, either explicitly, in the case of Marius, or implicitly, in the case of Pyrrhus), might, for example, have been designed to take the place of a formal *synkrisis* (Duff (1999) 254–255).

Thirteen of the surviving pairs begin with a formal prologue, which usually names the heroes of both *Lives* and thus brings them into a synkritic relationship right away: in *Cimon and Lucullus*, for example, we have, “On looking around for someone to compare with Lucullus, we decided it must be Cimon. Both were warriors and outstanding in their exploits against the barbarians and yet were mild and beneficent statesmen who gave their countries unusual respite from civil strife, although each of them set up military trophies and won much-famed victories” (*Cim.* 3.1). In other cases, the introduction is rather more sketchily handled or, in the case of *Themistocles and Camillus*, may even have been lost (Stadter (1988); Larmour (1992)). The general pattern, however, is quite clear: the prologue and *synkrisis* bind the pair of *Lives* together, with the prologues, for the most part, concentrating on the similarities between the two heroes and the *synkriseis*, again for the most part, delineating the differences. Thus, at the beginning of the Dion and Brutus comparison we read: “We see, therefore, that both men had many noble traits, and especially that they reached the greatest heights from the most inconsiderable beginning, but this is most to the credit of Dion, for he had no one to dispute his standing as Brutus had in Cassius” (*Comp.* 1.1). The *synkrisis* is primarily concerned with assessing the subjects’ characters and how their actions reveal their character; the prologue sometimes includes rather more banal similarities in the two men’s circumstances, such as the way they were born, as well as the ethical issues (Stiefenhofer (1914); Swain (1992); Duff (1999) 255–256). The *Theseus and Romulus* provides a representative example, where the following similarities are set out in chapter 2 of the first *Life*: both the Greek and the Roman (1) had a mysterious, semi-divine parentage; (2) performed warrior deeds; (3) established one of the world’s two great cities; (4) raped a number of women; (5) suffered domestic misfortune; and (6) came into conflict with his fellow-citizens. After the two narratives, which follow the same basic trajectory of a meteoric early rise in fortune followed by later unpopularity and a strange death, we come to the *synkrisis*: here, Theseus and Romulus are evaluated for their virtues and failings, including such matters as the motivation behind their notable exploits – in *Comp.* 1, it is suggested that Romulus acted out of fear and necessity, while Theseus set out to perform noble deeds “of his own accord.” In terms of carrying off women, Plutarch criticizes Theseus for excess and hubris, while arguing that Romulus took only one Sabine wife and treated her in an exemplary fashion; moreover, his actions were essentially good for Rome, whereas Theseus’ brought only trouble to the Athenians.

Similarly, considering the fact that both men came into conflict with their fellow-citizens in later life, Plutarch notes that while each deviated from the proper form of monarchy, Theseus leaned more toward democracy and Romulus toward tyranny, the one behaving more like a demagogue, the other a despot. Theseus' error we are told arose from *philanthropia* and *epieikeia*, Romulus' from *philautia* and *chalepotes*. In the matter of domestic misfortunes, Plutarch allows that both men behaved with unreasoning anger toward a son and a brother respectively, but Romulus comes in for much harsher criticism while Theseus is partially excused as driven by "love, jealousy and the lies of a woman" (Larmour (1988)). At the mid-point of the discussion (3.2), Plutarch says that on habits, passions, and fortune "one would give his vote to Theseus" but in *Comp.* 4 comments that Romulus has this one great superiority, "that he rose to eminence from the smallest beginnings." After discussion of some areas in which, for the most part, Romulus fares better, such as the way he treated his mother and grandfather, in contrast to Theseus' treatment of his parents, the *synkrisis* ends with the statement that while Romulus was preserved by the signal favor of the gods, the oracle given to Aegeus "appears to indicate that the birth of Theseus was contrary to the will of the gods (*para gnomen theon*)." This is an odd note to end on, as it seems to suggest that Theseus was in some way damned from the start. Yet it is typical of the way the *synkrisis* in any given pair provokes questions about its relevance and consistency and beyond that about just how valuable it is for instructing the reader: why, for instance, does the comparison simply come to a stop rather than reaching closure with a rounded-off summation and even a clear decision in favor of one subject or another? This in turn leads to two much larger questions. First, to what extent does the evaluation in this concluding comparison fit with the details of the two narratives preceding it – i.e. does it reiterate or contradict what has gone before? In other words, how seriously should we take them? Conversely, what influence do the judgments made in the formal comparison have on the form of the narratives themselves – i.e. are they specifically tailored with the *synkrisis* in mind? In other words, how much manipulation is there in the *Lives*?

The average length of the *synkrisis* is about five paragraphs, with some like the *Aemilius* and *Timoleon* falling on the shorter side: here Plutarch admits that there are few differences to demonstrate between the two figures, although he manages to argue that Aemilius' character is "manifestly more perfect" because of his behavior in times of adversity. In the case of *Cimon and Lucullus*, another *synkrisis* that is relatively uncomplicated, he comments that it is hard to reach a decision if one takes everything into account, since the gods seem to have been well disposed to each man, directing one as to what he should do, the other as to what he should avoid: "both therefore may be said to have received the vote of the gods as noble and godlike natures" (3.6). In such pairs, the *synkrisis* is largely a restatement of what has already been presented in the narratives themselves, albeit with a slightly different focus on the ethical grounding and motivation for the men's actions. In these cases and many others, equality of treatment appears to be one of Plutarch's primary aims, as it was indeed in the *Theseus and Romulus*, even if this means some reinterpreting of material from the narratives or even the introduction of new material. Duff notes that "Plutarch tries hard to give luxury-loving Lucullus as favourable treatment as Cimon" and sees similar signs of stretching the evidence in the *Lysander and Sulla*, *Nicias and Crassus* and *Alcibiades and Cato the Elder*" ((1999) 257–262). Plutarch may have had several reasons for taking this approach, including a wish not to appear biased toward one figure and to preserve a sort of Aristotelian "middle way" by refusing to come down

on one side or the other. He may have been desirous of placing the Greek and the Roman on an equal footing at the end of a pair, if his *Parallel Lives* were indeed an attempt, if not to reconcile the two traditions, at least to bring them into a closer and more harmonious association. He may also have wished to foreground the contemplation of the moral import of the work: as Duff ((1999) 263) puts it, “it focuses the reader’s attention not so much on the individual subjects – which was a better man? – as on the virtues and vices, or more subtly on the choices and ambiguities revealed by their two lives.”

In many cases, the *synkrisis* weighs a number of issues in a complex and unpredictable manner and we can see the labor of moral evaluation in process, as it were. The focus is frequently on the motivations for great deeds and notable successes, whether the subject was helped or not, and how great was his internal drive to scale the heights of fame and fortune. Thus, at the opening of the *Dion and Brutus synkrisis* (1) we are told that although both men rose to preeminence from the humblest of beginnings, “this is most to the credit (*kalliston*) of Dion” because he achieved success “by his own efforts.” Another prominent concern is how subjects interact with their fellow-citizens and friends and what their attitude to power turned out to be. In *Comp.* 3, Plutarch tackles the greatest charge against Brutus, namely that he killed his friend Caesar who had spared his life, and compares Dion who only started a war when he had been banished by his friend Dionysius. But then he asks, “or does this argument reverse itself at once?” – just the kind of question one might imagine an informed reader posing – and suggests that although both men deserve admiration for being hostile to tyrants, Brutus was disinterested whereas Dion might not have fought at all if he had not been mistreated. In this way, motivation becomes more important than mere action. This also allows Plutarch to bring Plato into the discussion: his letters make it clear that Dion did not revolt but was cast out from the tyranny and therefore overthrew Dionysius. The mention of Plato in turn picks up on a statement made in the prologue to the pair at the very beginning of the *Life of Dion*: “Dion was an immediate disciple of Plato, while Brutus was nourished on the doctrines of Plato so that both set out from one *palaistra* as it were to engage in the greatest *agones*” (1). Brutus’ particular devotion to the Old Academy is repeated at the opening of his *Life* (2). As the *synkrisis* continues, Brutus is said to have acted for the public good while Dion went to war “to gratify his anger”; consequently Dion was not trusted by all his friends but even Brutus’ enemies agree that Brutus’ sole aim was to restore to the Romans their ancient form of government. Here we can see how the *synkrisis* is intended to start the reader thinking about the ethical bases upon which the two subjects perform their actions. The process continues in *Comp.* 4, where Plutarch says that the struggle against Dionysius cannot be compared in terms of scale with that against Caesar, even though we might say that Dion had to fight harder while Brutus slew Caesar unarmed and unguarded. This leads into the proposition that Brutus had to display great ingenuity in getting to kill Caesar and that he was better than Dion in his choice and motivation of his friends. In several *synkrisis*es, including the *Lysander and Sulla*, *Pelopidas and Marcellus*, *Demosthenes and Cicero*, and *Sertorius and Eumenes*, Plutarch is interested in how the subjects died and what the aftermath of their deaths was: this might be thought of as offering a kind of closure to the whole text, completing the account that began from the discussion of the subjects’ births at the start of each *Life* (and sometimes taken up at the beginning of the *synkrisis*), but is also bound up with the notion of the “legacy” an individual has left behind. He is assessing how important his

military campaigns were (in the case of Sulla or Nicias) or how long-lasting his laws or other innovations proved (in the case of Solon or Numa) or how significant his other achievements are judged to be (as with Pericles' building program). So here we are told that nobody avenged Dion's death, but they did Brutus' and even Octavian preserved the honors due to him. The comparison concludes with an affecting story of how Octavian asked the townsfolk of Mediolanum why they had kept "an enemy of his" in their city, referring to a statue of Brutus, and, when they were dumbfounded, "praised them because they were true to their friends even in adversity and ordered that the statue should stay where it was" (*Comp.* 5). Once again, we witness a familiar pattern: the *synkrisis* thus opens by being more favorable to Dion but then shifts in its latter part toward Brutus. Nonetheless, in such cases, in spite of the fact that Brutus may be slightly preferred by virtue of being praised last, we may still speak of a rough "equality" of treatment in the *synkrisis* even in the absence of a general summing up, something that Plutarch generally eschews no doubt in order to leave the ball firmly in the reader's court.

It is an intriguing question to what extent the *synkrisis* colors the development of the narrative, even though it comes at the end of the text. In the *Theseus and Romulus*, for example, we can see how the neat distinction drawn in the *synkrisis* between Theseus' veering from the proper form of monarchy in the direction of democracy and Romulus' in the direction of tyranny is prefigured in the narrative: thus, while the synoecism of Athens is reported as occurring without violence and Theseus is generally presented as temperate in his dealings with his fellow-citizens, there are rumblings about the arrogant and violent side of Romulus' personality throughout the *Life*, not only in the accounts of the deaths of Remus and Tatius but also in the description of his ill-treatment of the patricians and his adoption of the outward symbols of monarchical power (Larmour (1988) 368–373). Plutarch's manipulation of his source material through the incidents he chooses to relate or emphasize, or through his citation of different versions of a particular event – either in order to privilege one version over the others or to muddy the waters by suggesting that it is difficult to decide which is the true account – has been well documented; to some extent, it is likely that this manipulation is performed with the arguments coming in the *synkrisis* in mind, but, in spite of the close relationship between the *synkrisis* and the narrative carefully delineated by Erbse and others, the interplay between the two is complex, varies across the numerous pairs, and cannot easily be reduced to any one paradigm.

In some pairs, for instance, there is quite a startling difference between the overall thrust of the narrative of the *Lives* and the position struck in the formal *synkrisis*. Striking contradictions occur in the *Antony and Demetrius*, of whose *synkrisis* Pelling ((1988) 19) remarks, "its level is uncomfortably trivial after the grandeur of the closing narrative: the moralism is crude, and it seems to us childish to be preoccupied with the ordering of the two men in each category." Pelling also finds it "disturbing that important themes remain untouched," such as how the two men responded to their fluctuating fortunes (19). He goes on to note "considerable discord" with the narrative, including the portrayal of Demetrius' killing of Alexander: in *Demetrius* 36, Plutarch implies that he acted in self-defense because Alexander was plotting to kill him, but in *Comp.* 5 the suggestion is that the charge was fabricated by Demetrius to supply a false justification for the murder. Pelling concludes that Plutarch "frequently seems to be improvising in these epilogues, making new points which had not been firmly in his mind when he constructed the narrative" (20). There is some justification for this view, not only given

several other examples, but also particularly when Plutarch himself admits as much in the *Nicias and Crassus* comparison: while detailing the Roman's tendencies toward violent and tyrannical behavior and simultaneously arguing that no harshness is attributable to Nicias, he tells how Crassus hit the senator L. Annalius in the face and drove him bleeding from the forum, "a fact which escaped our attention in the narrative" (*Comp.* 4). Presumably what would have been inconvenient to include in the *Life* is now useful for the argument being constructed in the *synkrisis*. Clearly, then, Plutarch does not regard consistency with the preceding narrative, either in the choice of what receives emphasis or in how specific details are reported, as his top priority. Duff (1999) speaks of "closural dissonance" in such cases, with the *Pericles and Fabius*, *Philopoemen and Flamininus*, *Nicias and Crassus*, *Agesilaus and Pompey*, *Demetrius and Antony*, and *Coriolanus and Alcibiades* being the most glaring examples. In these pairs, the *synkrisis* seems actively to destabilize the judgments we might expect the reader to have made upon emerging from the two preceding narratives. In the case of the *Agesilaus and Pompey*, for example, the *synkrisis* is largely hostile to Agesilaus and the tone is harsher than in the narrative of the *Lives*, where Pompey comes off worse. If we do not interpret such inconsistency as a flaw in Plutarch's compositional skills, then we must assume that it has a purpose, presumably one linked to the moralizing agenda of the *Parallel Lives*. In his introductory remarks in his edition of the *Life of Agesilaus* ((1977) 22), Shipley comments that "we may regard the two individuals' actions as open to our assessment successively throughout the narrative – the purpose *is* protreptic – and to contribute to our total view at the end ... we may then be surprised by the Plutarchan formal *Synkrisis* which by its final treatment (*Comp.* 5) favours neither man strongly: readers must judge for themselves." Duff (1999) likewise suggests that the closural dissonance he observes has an important function in the moral program of the biographies: the contrast makes the reader play a more active role in evaluating the ethical basis of the actions of each hero. The *synkrisis* thus points in two directions at once: toward closure and the settling of moral evaluation but also toward continuation of the *agon*. It transpires that far from settling matters, the *synkrisis* invites the reader to reopen the debate, to ask different questions – perhaps by adducing new evidence – and to engage in a continuing process of assessing what constitutes virtuous action by an individual living in a community.

We may conclude, then, that the formal *synkrisis*, if generally rather uninspired in terms of literary artistry and even with regard to the standard of the arguments presented about the relative merits of the two subjects in question, is the lynchpin of the ambitious and innovative comparative project of the *Parallel Lives*. It sets in motion the process of moral judgment by the reader and the development of a set of tools for the construction of an ethical self and of a life as a work of art informed by an understanding of the cardinal virtues of the Greek philosophical tradition. We have here, in these tripartite biographical texts, a version of what Foucault terms "the technology of the self" devised within, and as a response to, the subject position of an educated Greek living under Roman rule (Foucault (1988); Larmour (2005)).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

A succinct summary of the tradition of scholarship on the *synkrisis* is provided by Swain (1992); readers wishing to follow the diverse interpretations of the *synkrisis* over time in more detail are directed to Erbse (1956), Pelling (1986), Stadter ((1975) = (1995) 155–164), Lamberton (2001) and Larmour (2005). For specific examples of how the device of *synkrisis* works in various pairs of *Lives*, see Duff (1999), Larmour (1988) and (1992), Pelling (1988), Stadter ((1975) = (1995) 155–164), Swain (1988) and (1989). The lengthiest treatment of the *synkrisis* to date is by Duff (1999), who cites and evaluates much of the previous scholarship as he explores the moral purpose of the *Parallel Lives*.

CHAPTER 28

The Use of Historical Sources

Maria Teresa Schettino

1. The *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch: A Historiographical Project?

Plutarch is for us one of the principal sources for several central periods of ancient history, both Greek and Roman. Nevertheless, he did not consider himself as a historian. The learned man makes clear his intentions in a well-known passage at the beginning of the *Life of Alexander the Great* (1.2–3). He intended to present his readers with positive and negative examples: the *bios* and *ethos* of great men have an important function in his moral project. Although his intention is moral and ethical rather than historiographical, one would be mistaken in believing that his *Lives* have no historical value. In reality, especially because his models, both positive and negative, must be imprinted on the memory of the reader, the historicity of the facts that are recounted is not at all secondary. An example has value to the extent that it really happened. As a matter of fact, Plutarch has a historian's sensitivity, and we would again commit an error if we were to underestimate the credibility of his reconstructions, especially if we were to question the historicity of the events that, according to our conception, seem less likely to have occurred, such as the anecdotal sequences that characterize certain sections of his *Lives*. It was Philip Stadter who demonstrated the importance of such sequences; they enable Plutarch to convey his own ethical interpretation of the protagonist and are much more historically reliable because they function as the principal focalizing device of the biographer of Chaeronea.

The historical value of the *Parallel Lives* cannot therefore be separated from their ethical and moral value. This is confirmed in Plutarch's recourse to historical sources whose authority he recognizes with regard to the individual presented. Recourse to such sources is justified

not only because of the need to uncover information about the time period in question, but also because of the requirement that he base his reconstruction on verifiable data.

2. Plutarch's Historical Sources: The Greek *Lives* and the Roman *Lives*

In the *Lives*, Plutarch cites a large number of historians, around 135, of which one hundred write in Greek. The citation does not always indicate direct use. At times we are dealing with an indirect derivation that Plutarch retains as evidence because it reports a version that differs from the principal source or adds a detail that enriches the portrait and better illuminates the protagonist's nature. He did not read all of the authors he records: he only knows a few of them well; of the others he uses extensive excerpts, while a rich group is consulted for a particular insight or is cited second hand.

Often in the parallel biographies two names of writers are joined by the Greek word *kai* (and), and one can presume that one of the two had perhaps mentioned the other, and that Plutarch had read only one of them, yet he names them both together. However, the criterion he applies in adopting the citation is not uniform, and often the source is not even indicated. The absence of citations or their low number should not, however, mislead: it is enough to cite the case of the *Life of Agesilaus*, which Plutarch bases on three authors, Xenophon, Theopompus, and Ephorus. Ephorus, in fact, is never cited.

The Plutarchan citations play a fundamental role in the case of historians of whom we possess nothing else than fragments, as in the case of the aforementioned Ephorus and Theopompus: only they allow us to truly appreciate the use that Plutarch made of such sources. In such cases they therefore acquire a greater weight, even more so if one considers that they can contribute to the recovery of important sections of these works that would otherwise have been lost.

The selection of the historians correlates with three principal factors: (1) the individual protagonists of the *Lives* and the necessity of finding some reliable sources for these individuals; (2) the familiarity with those historians who had become paradigmatic, not only for their credibility but also, and above all, for their style; (3) the breadth or the brevity of certain works that facilitated the recovery of materials to use and reuse in different biographies.

Greek History: The Greek Sources

The Greeks to whom Plutarch dedicates a biography (excluding lost *Lives*) can be arranged in the following way:

- (a) Ten Athenians: the mythical founder Theseus; the legislator Solon; Themistocles, the victor of the naval battle of Salamis in the Second Persian War; his rival Aristides; Cimon, entrusted with continuing the war against Persia; the democratic statesman Pericles; Nicias, the leader of the aristocrats; Alcibiades, the controversial politician of fifth-century BCE Athens; and two personalities of the fourth century BCE, Phocion and Demosthenes.

- (b) Three Spartans (for the period up to the fourth century BCE): the lawgiver Lycurgus; the enterprising Lysander; and the king Agesilaus.
- (c) One Theban: Pelopidas.
- (d) Two Sicilians: Dion and Timoleon.
- (e) Alexander, his successors, and other figures of the Hellenistic age: Eumenes, Demetrius, Pyrrhus, as well as Aratus of Sicyon, the Spartan kings Agis and Cleomenes, both of whom Plutarch treats in a single biography, and Philopoemen of Megalopolis, four figures of the third century BCE united by the destiny of Peloponnesus, divided between Sparta and the hegemony of the Achaean League.

One can delineate a canon of Plutarchan historians for the Greek protagonists of his *Lives*, on the basis of his citations, without nevertheless tackling the vexed question of their direct or indirect use, and the comparison, wherever possible, with parallel passages.

1. The Attidographers, in particular Philochorus (eight citations), to which the local documentation of Sparta (*Lakonikai anagraphai*) corresponds. The former are consistently cited throughout the *Life of Theseus*, founder of the city (Philochorus), and in the *Life of Solon*, Athen's first lawgiver (Androtion). One of the primary sources of the *Life of Theseus*, while not always used directly but through Didymus, is Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*. The local Spartan documentation is cited in the *Lives* of the key individuals of the Spartan *polis* from its foundation to the Hellenistic period: Lycurgus, the mythical lawgiver, the military leader Lysander, king Agesilaus, and the sovereigns of the third century BCE, Agis and Cleomenes.
2. Herodotus (fifth century BCE), whose *Histories* present the Persian Wars: a small number of citations (six in all), but fifty Plutarchan passages are surely attributable to this historian on the basis of a comparison with Herodotus' work; among the *Lives* in which the use of Herodotus is sufficiently extensive are the biographies of Solon (six passages of Herodotean origin), Themistocles (seventeen passages, with three explicit citations), and Aristides (sixteen passages, with three citations). Phanias of Lesbos is also an important source on Themistocles, hero of the Second Persian War (seven citations in all, of which five are in the *Life of Themistocles*).
3. Stesimbrotus of Thasos (fifth century BCE), biographer of Athenian personalities: twelve citations, distributed among the biographies of Themistocles (three), Cimon (five), and Pericles (four).
4. Thucydides (fifth century BCE), historian of the Peloponnesian War (which lasted from 431 to 404 BCE, although Thucydides stops at 411 BCE): Plutarch cites him in the *Lives* twenty-nine times and presents him as one of his primary sources for the period from the victories over the Persians (*Lives of Themistocles, Aristides, and Cimon*) to the conflict between Athens and Sparta, and for the biographies of the illustrious Athenians alive at this time. Inasmuch as this does not constitute real proof, as we have already stated, it is nevertheless noteworthy that he is the most cited historian in the *Lives* of three key individuals in this phase of Athenian history: Pericles (six citations), Nicias (five citations), and Alcibiades (four citations).
5. Xenophon (fifth to fourth century BCE), cited eighteen times, is one of the historians that Plutarch knows and uses first hand. The historiographical works of Xenophon cited most are: the *Agesilaus*, the celebrated biography of the Spartan king and

- primary source of Plutarch's *Life of Agesilaus* (in which citations from this work recur); the *Hellenics*, which continue the Thucydidean narration (from 411 to the battle of Mantinea in 362 BCE), cited and used above all in the biographies of three Spartan personalities: Lysander (one citation), Lysander (one citation), and Agesilaus himself.
6. Ephorus of Cyme and Theopompus of Chios, historians of the fourth century BCE, who were both disciples of Isocrates. Ephorus wrote a universal history in thirty books, which he had begun with the return of the Heraclidae and finished in 341 BCE with the siege of Perinthus; Theopompus was the author of the *Hellenics*, which continued the *Histories* of Thucydides from 411 to 394 (battle of Cnidus), and the *Philippica*, a far-reaching historiographical work centered on Philip of Macedon. The universal history of Ephorus (which Plutarch cites fifteen times in the *Lives*) allows Plutarch to add details and information in the biographies of various individuals of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE, such as Cimon (two citations), Pericles (two citations), Alcibiades (one citation), and Lysander (four citations); moreover, Ephorus is the source for the Sicilian events (*Life of Dion*, one citation; *Life of Timoleon*, one citation: see below). Theopompus (mentioned twenty-one times in Plutarch's biographies) completes in particular the depiction of the fourth century, with citations in the biographies of Agesilaus (four), Lysander (three), and Demosthenes (four), but also in those of Lysander (four), Themistocles (three), Alcibiades (one), Dion (one), and Timoleon (one). In the *Life of Demosthenes* one encounters the highest number of citations by Hermippus of Smyrna (four out of twelve).
 7. Ctesias of Cnidus (nineteen citations), Dinon of Colophon (nine), both from the fourth century BCE, whose works present Persian history: they are cited in the biography of Artaxerxes (all of the citations from Ctesias belong to this biography, seven citations out of eight for Dinon), which Plutarch bases also on Xenophon's *Anabasis* and Ephorus' work.
 8. Philistus of Syracuse (fifth to fourth century BCE, nineteen citations) and Timaeus of Tauromenium (fourth to third century BCE, fifteen citations): both Sicilian historians are mentioned in the biographies of individuals who played a role on the island, starting from the Athenian expedition in Sicily (in particular the *Life of Nicias*) up to Dion and Timoleon (most of the citations are found in the biographies of these two individuals).
 9. The historians of Alexander: Aristobulus (six citations, one in the *Life of Demosthenes*, the others in the *Life of Alexander*), Callisthenes (eighteen, eleven of which are in the *Life of Alexander*), Chares (seven, five of which are in the biography of Alexander), Onesicritus (five, all of which are in Alexander's biography), the *Ephemerides*, the court diaries (three, two of which are in the *Life of Alexander* and the third in that of Eumenes), Nearchus (ten citations: eight in the biography of Alexander and two in that of Eumenes). For the biography of Alexander, Plutarch was able to rely on an abundance of previous biographical material he had read and often cites first hand.
 10. Duris of Samos, Phylarchus, Hieronymus of Cardia: Duris (fourth to third century BCE) was the author of a historical work, in at least twenty-three books, which covered the period from 371 (battle of Leuctra) to 280 BCE (death of Lysimachus), a work on Agathocles of Syracuse, and a *History of Samos*, in at least two books. The

Histories of Phylarchus (third century BCE) continue from the point where Duris left off. Hieronymus wrote a history of the Diadochi and their descendants that began with the death of Alexander (323 BCE) and ended with that of Pyrrhus (272 BCE). These are three important sources for Hellenistic history, occasionally covering individuals who were their contemporaries, as in the case of Hieronymus on Pyrrhus. In the *Lives*, Plutarch preserves ten passages from Duris (of the thirty-three surviving), distributed among the *Lives* of Alcibiades (one), Pericles (one), Agesilaus (one), Lysander (one), Phocion (two), Demosthenes (two), Alexander (one), and Eumenes (one). Phylarchus is cited nine times, of which seven are found in the *Lives* of personalities of the fourth and third centuries BCE, specifically the biographies of Agis and Cleomenes (four), Pyrrhus (two), and Demosthenes (one). Hieronymus is cited only six times: in the *Lives* of Eumenes (one), Demetrius (two), and Pyrrhus (three).

11. Polybius (second century BCE): his work is the principal source of Hellenistic history and the relationships between the Greek and Roman worlds, as demonstrated by the citations from *Histories* scattered in diverse biographies of Greek and Roman personalities (sixteen). Among these, four are located in the biographies of two Greeks, individuals from the fourth century BCE, Pelopidas (one citation) and Philopoemen (three), while the other personalities are almost all from the third and second centuries BCE: the *Lives* of Aratus (two citations), Agis and Cleomenes (two), Claudius Marcellus (one), Cato the Elder (three), Aemilius Paulus (three), Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (one). The use of Polybius does not seem to be limited to the *Histories*: in order to compose the *Life of Philopoemen*, Plutarch made full use of the lost biography Polybius dedicated to this individual. Traces of the aforementioned work are noted also in the biography of Cleomenes (cf. 24.1 and 8–9). Polybius marks the transition to Roman history.

Roman History: The Sources on the Republic

The Roman individuals to whom Plutarch dedicates biographies can be subdivided in the following way (lost *Lives* are not taken into account):

- (a) Two for the regal period: Romulus and Numa.
- (b) Three for the Ancient Republic (fifth to fourth century BCE): Valerius Publicola, Coriolanus, and Camillus.
- (c) Seven for the phase of Roman expansion (third to second century BCE): Claudius Marcellus, Fabius Maximus, Titus Quinctius Flamininus, Cato the Censor, Aemilius Paulus, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus.
- (d) Eleven for the last century of the Republic: Marius, Sulla, Sertorius, Lucullus, Pompey, Crassus, Cato the Younger, Caesar, Brutus, Cicero, and Antony.
- (e) The Imperial biographies, of which only the *Lives* of Galba and Otho remain.

In addition to Polybius, Plutarch bases his biographies of Roman personalities on other historical sources that belong above all to the Caesarean and Augustan epochs. Also in this case, the data derive not just from the number of citations, which are sometimes conspicuous and occasionally insignificant, but more so from a comparison

with the historical works at our disposal. It goes without saying that, for the fragmentary authors, Plutarch's citations have a high documentary value. Selecting the primary Plutarchan sources for the Roman biographies, the following historians represent a possible canon:

1. Posidonius of Apamea, a disciple of Panaetius and author of the *Histories* that continued the work of Polybius: twelve citations in the *Lives* of Marcellus (four), Fabius Maximus (one), Marius (three), Pompey (one), Brutus (two), and Cicero (one).
2. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, whose historical work covered the origins of Rome until the events leading up to the First Punic War: cited four times, but the possible comparisons are numerous between the Plutarchan passages and the Dionysian works. An almost exclusive source for the ancient history of Rome, he is cited once in the *Life of Romulus*, twice in that of *Pyrrhus*, and once in that of *Coriolanus*. However, much more numerous are the passages related to Dionysius that can be detected in the biographies of Numa (thirty-four), Publicola (eight), Coriolanus (six), and Camillus (four). He is an important source for one figure of the Hellenistic age: Pyrrhus. Through Dionysius Plutarch could also recover certain contemporary sources on events, as in the case of the commentaries of Pyrrhus compiled by Proxenus.
3. Along with Dionysius should be mentioned Juba, ruler of Mauritania and author of a historical work that reaches at least the age of Sulla. Plutarch cites him nine times, either as a historical personage, as in the *Lives* of Sertorius (one citation), Caesar (one), and Antony (one), or as a source, as in the *Lives* of Romulus (three citations), Numa (two), and Sulla (one).
4. Livy, author of a history of Rome from its foundation to his own time, is one of Plutarch's primary sources for specific Roman biographies, notwithstanding the fact that the number of citations is not the most elevated (fourteen). Livy is cited in the following biographies: *Camillus* (one), *Marcellus* (four), *Cato the Elder* (one), *Flaminius* (three), *Lucullus* (two), *Sulla* (one), and *Caesar* (two). Nevertheless, comparison with his historical work allows us to hypothesize an increased number of passages from Livy.
5. The autobiographies and commentaries of celebrated personalities deserve a separate place: among these the recurrence of Sulla's *Memoirs* stands out (twelve citations), in the *Lives* dedicated to Sulla (seven citations) and to contemporary individuals like Marius (three citations) and Lucullus (two citations).

This list, although not exhaustive, demonstrates an accurate selection of primary historical sources used by Plutarch, in which the fate of certain authors must have had significance. It is well documented that seven out of eight historians of the Alexandrian canon composed of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Theopompus, Ephorus, Philistus, Anaximenes of Lampascus, and Callisthenes are among the sources most used by Plutarch for Greek history. In some cases traces remain of the widely used sources in numerous citations, but occasionally the absences, as has already been noted, should not lead us to believe that Plutarch did not understand or had not read important historians. This applies in particular to the historians of the Latin language, which also gives rise to the question of Plutarch's knowledge of this language. A comparison between Plutarch and Sallust regarding the portrait of Catiline provides some insight on this question.

3. Plutarch's Knowledge of Latin

The conspiracy of Catiline is narrated variously in four of the Plutarchan *Lives*. The first and most widely recounted version of events is presented in Cicero's biography, which occupies thirteen of the forty-nine chapters (from the tenth to the twenty-third chapter); the event is also recorded in the *Lives* of Caesar (chs. 7–8), Cato (chs. 22–24), and Crassus (ch. 13); simple allusions constitute references to the conspiracy in other works of Plutarch. The greater narrative space reserved for the conspiracy in the biography of Cicero is relative to the importance that such an event had in the protagonist's life and therefore in his biography. In Cicero's biography a psychological pattern prevails in which the delineation of Catiline's character is also inserted. This leads to a comparison with the portrait presented by Sallust in his celebrated monograph. Three elements define the character of Catiline in the Plutarchan portrait (*Cic.* 10): audacity, ambitious plans, and unpredictability: *andra tolmeten kai megalopragmona kai poikilon to ethos*. These elements are not borne out in any other source, the sole exception being the famous description in Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*. In this work (*Cat.* 5), Catiline's character is delineated in three successive sequences as follows: "his mind was reckless, cunning, treacherous, capable of any form of pretense or concealment ... His disordered mind ever craved the monstrous, incredible, gigantic ... His haughty spirit was goaded more and more every day by poverty and a sense of guilt" (*animus audax, subdolos, varius ... Vastus animus immoderata, incredibilia, nimis alta semper cupiebat ... Agitabatur magis magisque in dies animus ferox inopia rei familiaris et conscientia scelerum*). The recklessness of the mind (*audax*) is connected with its immoderate aspirations (*vastus animus*) and with its unpredictability (*varius*). The *audax* is then conceptually connected to the *ferox* of the last sentence, which heightens its negative value, just as *varius* is connected to *subdolos* in the first expression, since the variability of the character means assuming different poses or attitudes in order to deceive. Plutarch summarizes in a single sentence the traits that Sallust describes in a fuller and detailed form.

Plutarch's adherence to Sallust's text emerges even more clearly if we examine the terms he uses that reveal a desire to express the sense of the Latin. As already explained, there are three basic elements of the character in the two authors.

The first is expressed by Plutarch with *tolmetes*. The term appears only in the *Lives*, and in only a few cases (seven times). Differently from the passage under examination, it usually has a positive value and characterizes audacity in war. However, it is semantically close to the Sallustian *audax*, whose root *audeo* (via **avideo* from *avidus*) is conceptually close to the verbal root *tolmetes*, **tlaō* (Lat.: *tollo*). The reason for the preference accorded to such a term probably resides in the semantic affinity of *tolmetes* with Sallust's term.

The second characteristic is indicated by Plutarch with *megalopragmon*. This adjective recurs uniquely in the *Lives*, seven times, and when it has a negative sense (three times, excluding the present instance) always appears in association with at least one other adjective that indicates its significance. In this case it is the context that determines its negative value. The reason for the use of such an adjective seems to reside in the desire to capture the meaning of the term *vastus* in Latin. Plutarch prefers a word connected

etymologically with *magnus* (= *megas*+ *prasso*) because it had to appear on a conceptual level best adapted to express the Latin *vastus*, in an attempt to reproduce in Greek the use of a Latin adjective that is completely Sallustian.

The third element is indicated in Plutarch with the expression *poikilon to ethos*. The term *poikilos* is used in the *Lives* fourteen times, but only in three instances does it connote an individual's character, including the occurrence here under examination. The sense is not only voluble but, in the *Life of Themistocles* (29.2), also suggests astuteness and in the *Life of Marius* (12.3) adaptability to circumstances. Plutarch's expression in the *Life of Cicero* (10.3) thus renders the significance of *varius* ("capable of any form of pretense or concealment") connected with *subdolus* ("cunning, treacherous") of Sallust's text: the meaning is not only changeable, inconstant, but also *simulator*, *dissimulator* (pretender).

These three words aim at faithfully reproducing Sallust's terminology and some of his particular expressions (*vastus animus*). Now, in *Demosthenes* 2.2–3.1, Plutarch declares that he did not have time to train himself in the Latin language, and in consequence was not qualified to express a judgment on the stylistic value of Cicero's work. On the basis of this affirmation, one might maintain that he has made use of the translation from the Hadrianic age by Zenobius. But in reality, his affirmation does not exclude possession of sufficient knowledge to read the Latin texts. It is probable that Plutarch reflected on Sallust's portrait of Catiline in order to transpose it in Greek, which is indicated in two ways. (1) The reflection on the expression *poikilon to ethos*: such an expression appears only in the passage of the *Life of Cicero* in analysis and in similar form in a Plutarchan fragment where its meaning is specified. Its limited use and specificity identify it as the fruit of a linguistic analysis undertaken by the Greek author on the Latin author's work. (2) The reformulation, in the *Life of Cato the Younger*, of the sentence in *Cic.* 10.3 in which the personality of Catiline is delineated through analogous terms or by inverted meaning. In *Cat. Min.* 22.3 the attributes of *deilian kai mikrologian ton tolmematon* are ascribed to Catiline: the *megalopragma* of Catiline's *tolmetes* (*Cic.* 10) corresponds to the *mikrologia* of his reckless exploits (*ton tolmematon*) of *Cat. Min.* 22.3. The inverted use of words suggests an intentional choice on the part of Plutarch.

The echoes of Sallust would seem to derive from prior readings integrated within the body of the principal narration. Plutarch addresses a public that certainly would have been able to appreciate his referencing of Sallust and transposition of Sallust's text into Greek. The regret he expresses concerning his scant competence in the Latin language must not arouse doubts about his knowledge of the language; instead it concerns stylistic appreciation and underlines his interest in such a specific area. A famous letter from Fronto to Marcus Aurelius demonstrates how Sallust was read and commented upon in similar passages, in particular the moral portraits regarding specific individuals (Catiline, Jugurtha, Spurius Albinus, Marius, Sempronia) or groups (the corrupt soldiers, the uprisings of the plebs). Plutarch reads Sallust as a delineator of *ethe*; he derives those characteristics that further underline the reprehensible aspects of the *animus* of Catiline: audacity, lack of reflection, ambition, and changeability of a mind that is always ready to don the attire best suited to entice his audience, in particular the young. A comparison reveals that his knowledge of the Latin language was not superficial and allowed him to read, critique, and transpose important passages of historical works written in Latin.

4. Plutarchan Interpretation and the Adaptation of Plutarchan Sources

Multiple examples can be adopted to underline how Plutarch selects and adapts his own sources in order to convey a moral interpretation of the individual. I will select an emblematic case, that of Marcus Licinius Crassus. While most of the contemporary sources are lost, Plutarch's biography remains the most organic testimony on this individual of the late Republic. The *Life* dedicated to Crassus is divided into two parts that are not symmetrically proportionate with respect to the arc of time each represents: the first fifteen chapters narrate the events up to the allocation of the province of Syria, in fact all of Crassus's career; the other eighteen are entirely dedicated to a single event, the Parthian expedition, from the dismal premonitions of the departure to the military campaign and its tragic outcome. Although Crassus was at the center of political life in Rome for thirty years, Plutarch's biography of him represents a person consigned to failure, punishment for his greed and ambition.

The historical significance of Crassus is diminished and his figure assumes a universal value, an example to blame: subordinate in his homeland to Pompey and Caesar, defeated and killed in the expedition that was to have given him glory. Crassus is the one who fails from time to time in his objective. The biography, however, presents a distorted image: Plutarch not only changes the interpretation on an ethical level, but also proposes a reading of the entire life of Crassus through the filter of the disaster of Carrhae. The construction of the biography is not only the result of the sources used, but reveals a completely Plutarchan matrix that constitutes the interpretive framework governing the selection, adaptation, and integration of its sources. The biography in fact marks a basic difference in tradition, after which the individual Crassus remains linked to his tragic destiny, the inevitable defeat in the battle of Carrhae. In successive authors after Plutarch who differ in their backgrounds and education, the theme of Carrhae acquires as much vigor by becoming a central element in the commemoration of the figure of Crassus (Polyaenus, Athenaeus, Cassius Dio).

The life of the powerful Roman, who with his money was able to manipulate the senate at whim, thus becomes a metaphor of the fragility of power and human destiny, consigning to history the figure of Crassus emblematic for his tragic death but receding from political significance, despite his not being dull and colorless and living for almost thirty years at the pinnacle of Roman power.

5. Method of Selection and Use of Historical Sources

Variety of Sources

When Plutarch had a multitude of sources, not only historical ones, at his disposal, he made use of them, albeit in different forms (direct or indirect) and measure. For example, the *Life of Solon* is based on Aristotle's *Constitutions of the Athenians* (with a mixed use of this source, direct and indirect, through Didymus). Didymus, while mentioned only once, is used fully, above all in the section referring to the laws. One can also distinguish

other sources, such as Hermippus and Phanias of Eresus. One notes the frequent citations (four) in the *Life of Solon* from Heraclides Ponticus too, although Plutarch did not place much faith in this author. Nevertheless, Heraclides Ponticus played an important role in modifying the tradition that strove to openly contrast Solon and Peisistratus, influencing the interpretation of Plutarch, who considered them linked by relations of kinship and friendship.

Another significant case is the biography of Demosthenes, where eighteen historians and orators are cited as sources; among the historians, the most important are Theopompus (*Dem.* 4.1, 13.1, 18.2–3, 21.2) and Duris (*Dem.* 19.3, 23.4).

There are numerous sources also for the Spartans. In the *Lycurgus*, Plutarch refers to sixteen historians who are more or less known. In the *Lysander*, the presence of Xenophon is most systematic inasmuch as it does not appear from a solitary, explicit citation (15.7). But Plutarch also drew from ten other historians. In the *Agesilaus*, the principal sources are unquestionably the *Hellenics* as well as the *Agesilaus* of Xenophon. Plutarch has nevertheless integrated his principal source with Theopompus and Ephorus who, while not cited in this biography, is in those of Lysander and Pelopidas. In the Roman *Lives*, a significant case is the biography of Caesar, where, in addition to Caesar himself, Plutarch cites Cicero, Oppius, Tanusius Geminus, Asinius Pollio, Livy, and Strabo. There are various indications in the section dedicated to the Gallic and civil wars (*Caes.* 18–56) that lead us to presume that Plutarch was familiar with the literary works of Caesar, even if this does not imply their use as a source. Scholars differ in their opinions on this point. There are supporters and adversaries of this thesis. It certainly does not exclude the possibility that Plutarch made extensive use of the *Histories* of Asinius Pollio.

An assortment of authors also appears in the presence of a basic source or that Plutarch identifies as an authoritative reference. This is the case in the biographies of Pericles, Nicias, and Alcibiades, where the most important source is Thucydides. Nevertheless, in the *Life of Pericles*, next to Thucydides, who is cited in 9.1, 15.3, 28.8, and 33.1 and used in many other passages where his work is not expressly recorded as a source, Plutarch bases his account on Ephorus (*Per.* 27.3, 28.2), on the *Constitution of the Athenians* by Aristotle (*Per.* 4.1, 9.2, 10.8, 26.3, 28.2), on Duris of Samos (*Per.* 28.2–3) and on Stesimbrotus of Thasos (*Per.* 8.9, 13.16, 26.1, 36.6), on whose evidence Plutarch expresses a negative judgment.

The dependence on Thucydides is certain also in the *Life of Alcibiades*, at least until chapter 27, that is, for the deeds accomplished up to 411 (the date to which Thucydides' work extends); in successive chapters a close link is likewise evident with the *Hellenics* of Xenophon. Ephorus and Theopompus are, nevertheless, also used as sources by Plutarch.

It may be noted that Plutarch aims on the one hand at a wide spectrum of sources, and on the other at a selection that underlines the ethical value of the protagonists as well as the reliability of historical evidence. For this motive he is not exempt from making judgments, as for example in the *Life of Nicias*, whose principal sources are Thucydides, Philistus, and Timaeus, whose works Plutarch uses the most without citing them directly. Plutarch does not hide his admiration for Thucydides, his esteem for Philistus, or his lack of faith in Timaeus. In the *Life of Alcibiades* (32.2), he contrasts Theopompus, Ephorus, and Xenophon with Duris of Samos, whom he accuses of bias in the debate about Alcibiades.

Sources of Opposing Tendencies: Favorable or Hostile to the Protagonist

In the biographies of Agis IV and Cleomenes III, sovereigns who in the second half of the third century BCE pursued a profound reform of the Spartan state with the intention of eliminating the causes of decadence and returning Sparta to its ancient position of power, Plutarch was able to make use of two opposing sources. One was the partisanly favorable version by Phylarchus, and the other was from the Achaean side, which was extremely hostile to the Spartan kings, represented in particular by Aratus and Polybius. In reinforcing Sparta, Agis and Cleomenes had constructed the largest obstacle to the expansionist policies of the Achaean League. This caused the failure of Aratus' activity, whose aim was the unification of the Peloponnese.

Phylarchus is cited four times (*Agis* 9.3; *Cleom.* 5.3, 28.2, 30.3), but he is believed to be nearly the only historical source for the reign of Agis, for which the version favorable to the Achaean side offers very little information. He was used consistently by Plutarch for the account of the career of Cleomenes.

Plutarch compared the evidence offered by Phylarchus with the opposing version favorable to the Achaean side. The *Memoirs* of Aratus of Sicyon are cited four times (*Agis* 15.4; *Cleom.* 16.4–5, 17.4, 19.4–5), but Plutarch, who had used the work for the biography of Aratus, must have kept it in mind for the entire account of the war between Cleomenes and the Achaean League, comparing the evidence with that of Phylarchus. Plutarch's concern to use the opposing versions is confirmed in various ways, including in the narration of Aratus' appeal to Antigonos Doson: just as in the biography of Aratus (38.5–12) Plutarch had used the evidence of Phylarchus and Polybius to refute the justifications of the Achaean statesman, so in chapter 16 of the *Life of Cleomenes* he maintains his negative judgment, making use also of a citation from the *Memoirs* in order to illuminate Aratus' lack of political consistency.

A complementary example is the *Life of Aratus*. Plutarch bases this *Life*, in the first instance, on the *Memoirs* of Aratus himself, written in his own defense in a period when criticisms against him must have been extremely harsh because of his alliance with the Macedonians. The *Memoirs* must have comprised an apology by the Achaean statesman. Plutarch cites them four times (*Arat.* 3.3, 32.5, 33.3, 38.6). The use of Polybius, apart from one solitary citation (*Arat.* 38.11–12), is demonstrated by the numerous coincidences of Plutarch's account with that of Polybius. Nevertheless, Plutarch does not limit himself to using the Achaean sources, Aratus and Polybius, but also turns to the hostile tradition. Phylarchus is cited only once (38.11–12) in regard to his version of diplomatic relations between Aratus and Antigonos Doson: Plutarch affirms that this testimony seems credible to him for its concordance with that of Polybius, adding that Phylarchus, who is generally hardly reliable, is worth consideration because of his partiality in favor of Cleomenes against Aratus. It is probable that Plutarch, despite the critics, used Phylarchus elsewhere in the biography in order to balance the version more favorable to Aratus.

In the Roman *Lives*, an interesting case of cross-referencing of opposing sources, at times contemporary with the events, is that of the biography of the Gracchi. The truly sparse indications supplied by Plutarch are proof, once again, of his use of a

plurality of sources motivated by opposing tendencies, and reflect a historiographical debate that was very much alive and already underway among those who were contemporaries of the Gracchi. In particular, Plutarch cites a book by Gaius Gracchus referring to Tiberius' trip to Etruria (*Tib. Gracch.* 8.9), and he furthermore mentions his writings (*C. Gracch.* 4.9). Nevertheless, he also mentions the annalist Fannius, who was an eyewitness to an act of valor by Tiberius during the siege of Carthage (*Tib. Gracch.* 4.6). From Fannius we can also obtain the speech of Q. Metellus Macedonicus against Tiberius (*Tib. Gracch.* 14.4), to which Fannius refers in his work. The annalist seems to be identified with Gaius Fannius, who was elected consul in 122 with the support of Gaius Gracchus but became his bitter adversary (*C. Gracch.* 8.2–3, 12.2–4). This led Plutarch to consider Fannius' account as being hostile to the Gracchi; a conclusion, moreover, that seems to receive confirmation by the exaltation of Scipio Aemilianus, who was an opponent of the Gracchi's actions. Since Fannius was linked to Panaetius and the Stoic environment, his work was most certainly known by Posidonius, and we can presume that Plutarch knew Fannius' account indirectly through the latter.

The use of opposing sources in terms of their bias as well as the recourse to accounts contemporaneous with events is also detected in the biography of Marius. Among these, of particular interest are the *Memoirs* of Sulla, which Plutarch cites three times (*Mar.* 25.6–7, 26.5–6, 35.4) and seems to have known well, as the citations in the biographies of Sulla and Lucullus as well as in the *Moralia* demonstrate. The citation from Sulla in *Mar.* 35.4, together with an anonymous version that is completely at variance, would demonstrate that Plutarch used the *Memoirs* and compared them with a source favorable to Marius.

Regarding the battle of Vercellae, Plutarch (*Mar.* 25.8, 26.10, 27.6) cites in addition the work of Lutatius Catulus, written to defend his actions and vindicate his merits in the victory against the Cimbres, in open disagreement with Marius. Plutarch himself admits explicitly to having had only an indirect familiarity with this work: the versions of Catulus and Sulla serve in both instances to negate the role of Marius in the victory and to exalt the valor of the soldiers positioned under the direct command of Catulus, amongst whom was Sulla himself; this analogy leads us to conclude that Plutarch knew Catulus' account just through the *Memoirs* of Sulla.

Along with the narratives of Sulla and Catulus, important for their value as eyewitness accounts though limited to those episodes in which the two individuals had taken part, Plutarch was also able to make use of more detailed versions furnished by historians contemporary with the events. In the *Life of Marius* (28.8) Plutarch refers to the testimony of the historian P. Rutilius Rufus concerning the corruption to which Marius would have recourse in order to secure his election to the sixth consulate and the failure of the candidacy of his rival, Metellus Numidicus. Hostility to Marius must have been reflected in the political thought and writings of Rutilius, who, linked to the Stoic doctrine and a disciple of Panaetius, was also the author of *Histories* in Greek and an autobiography in Latin. The narration of Rutilius was also used by Plutarch through the intermediary of Posidonius, who was familiar with the work of Rutilius (Athenaeus 6.274c–d) and makes use of it (Athenaeus 4.168d–c). He could have influenced Plutarch not only in numerous episodes, but also in his general judgment on Marius, as an honorable and valorous man in his youth, but corrupt in his old age because of greed.

Contemporaneous Sources

Two examples can be mentioned with regard to contemporaneous sources. The first concerns the *Life of Philopoemen*. At one point in the biography Plutarch makes reference to sources: at 16.4, where he narrates how Philopoemen forces the city of Sparta into the Achaean League and abolishes the Lycurgan system on which the Spartan constitution was founded, he cites Polybius and Aristocrates as authors who give conflicting dates for the massacre. The examination of this *Life* shows, nevertheless, that the primary source employed by Plutarch seems to have been Polybius, and that the citation from Aristocrates must be considered casual, although Plutarch knew his work, *Lakoniká*, which he also cites in two passages in the biography of Lycurgus. It is further proof of the fact that Plutarch looks for correspondences or confirms his assertions when he has the possibility of doing so, having at his disposal an authoritative source like Polybius as well. Because he had been a friend and collaborator of his father Lycortas, Polybius knew Philopoemen personally and dedicated an encomiastic biography to him. We know that when Philopoemen died, in 183, it was the young Polybius, then twenty-five years old, who had the honor at the funeral of carrying the urn containing the ashes of the hero from Messene to Megalopolis.

The first four chapters of Plutarch's *Life*, covering Philopoemen's early years and education, in all probability owe much to the first book of the *Life of Philopoemen* by Polybius; for the remainder of the narration Plutarch almost certainly used Polybius' most important work, where, from the tenth book, the narrative focuses extensively on Philopoemen and his actions. Plutarch therefore bases his account on one source that is not only authoritative, but whose author personally knew the protagonist in the Hellenistic history of the Peloponnese and was therefore in a better position to delineate his personality and character (*ethos*) than other historians.

The second example derives from the biography of Alexander. Aristobulus, Chares, and Onesicritus are cited six times, Callisthenes three times, Eratosthenes, Duris, and his court diary two times, while Antigene, Anticleides, Aristoxenus, Cleitarchus, Dinon, Hegesias, Hecateus of Eretria, Heraclides, Hermippus, Istrus, Philip of Chalcides, Philip of Theangela, Philo, Polyclitus, Ptolemy, Sotion, and Theophrastus are mentioned only once. Although the opinions of scholars diverge, the most widely accepted hypothesis is that Plutarch used different sources, among which would be included without a doubt Callisthenes, Onesicritus, Chares, Aristobulus, and Cleitarchus. That is, he used historians who were not only contemporaries of Alexander, but were also part of his entourage (Callisthenes, Onesicritus, Aristobulus).

The Same Source for Biographies and Lives Belonging to a Unified Plan

It is enough to cite the paired *Lives of Philopoemen–Quintus Flamininus*, which Plutarch bases on Polybius as his main source, as well as the biographies of Cleomenes and Aratus, which, as we have seen, have sources in common, i.e. Polybius, Phylarchus, and Aratus.

The biographies of the protagonists of the Late Republic (Crassus, Pompey, Caesar, Cato the Younger, Brutus, Antony) show notable similarities among them in their use

and interpretation of the material offered by the sources; it is thought for this reason that Plutarch conceived a unified plan for these biographies, broadly using the same material. The selection made for each of these biographies from the same source material highlights the ethical interpretation elucidated by Plutarch: a historiographical selection that is transformed into moral judgment.

6. Athens and Sparta: Historiographical Choices and Historical Interpretation

For the majority of the Athenian biographies (from Theseus to Pericles), and for that of Lycurgus, one of the fundamental questions is the use of the *Constitutions* of Aristotle. A correct understanding of this issue would clarify the relationship between Plutarch's method and his interpretation of the past.

The survival of the *Constitution of the Athenians* (*Athenaion Politeia*) has facilitated identification of the structure of these treatises. They were arranged in two parts: the first part examines the constitutional history of the *polis* in question, while the second examines the institutional structure in the time of Aristotle. From the Plutarchan *corpus* we have twenty-two fragments of the *Constitutions*; for the most part they are found in the *Lives* and make up more than one-third of the total number of citations from Aristotle (sixty-five). Plutarch also uses Aristotle, and in particular the *Constitution of the Athenians*, without mentioning him. Nevertheless, if we limit ourselves to the citations, seven fragments belong to this work, all of them in the biographies of the Athenian personalities. Plutarch's knowledge of this treatise is commonly accepted, although this does not always correspond to a direct use. Significant in this regard is the case of the biography of Solon, which reveals in several places a dependence on the *Constitution of the Athenians*, but this may be through the mediation of Didymus. The only citation, in *Sol.* 25 (*Ath. Pol.* 7.2), seems in reality indirect, regarding the centennial duration of Solon's laws and the attribution of the name *kyrbeis* to the *axones* on which the laws were written. The absence in the *Constitution of the Athenians* of the verses of Cratinus, cited in *Sol.* 25 confirming the Aristotelian version, as well as the attribution to Aristophanes of Byzantium (F 76 Nauck) of the difference between *kyrbeis* and *axones*, leads us to assign the Aristotelian citation to an intermediary source, identifiable as Didymus, who made use of Aristotle, was the author of a commentary on Cratinus, and knew Aristophanes of Byzantium. Four more fragments of the *Constitution of the Athenians* constitute isolated citations in corresponding Plutarchan biographies, from which it is difficult to determine whether Plutarch did or did not derive them from an intermediary source.

First-hand citations seem instead to be fragments included in the *Life of Pericles*. The first (*Per.* 9 = *Ath. Pol.* 27.3) is inserted in the conclusion in a comparison between Cimon and Pericles, which views the latter as inferior to the riches and the means of the former; for this reason, Pericles was at a disadvantage when dealing with the people, and thus began to distribute the resources of the state, following, according to the Aristotelian testimony, the advice of Damon of Oa. Plutarch welcomes the Aristotelian testimony because it is in line with his interpretation of the figure of Pericles. It is inserted in a similar context in the corresponding passage of the *Constitution of the Athenians*

(comparison between Cimon and Pericles); moreover, the Aristotelian variant regarding the offer of lunch on Cimon's behalf only to members of his own *deme* is referred to, with mention of the same passage in Aristotle, in *Cim.* 10.2: the two coincidences lead us to believe in a direct derivation from *Ath. Pol.* 27.3–4.

The second citation (*Per.* 10 = *Ath. Pol.* 25.4) concerns the assassination of Ephialtes. Plutarch refutes the testimony of Idomeneus, who attributed the death of Ephialtes to Pericles, as being inconsistent with the moral portrait of Pericles, while he welcomes the Aristotelian version, according to which his personal enemies, with the assistance of Aristodicus of Tanagra, killed him in an underhand manner. The proximity of the two citations in the Plutarchan text and of the related passages of the *Constitution* leads us to postulate also in this second case the absence of intermediary sources.

The citations from this *Constitution* are therefore inserted by Plutarch with two objectives: as a confirmation of the moral portrait of an individual (Theseus, Nicias, Pericles) or because they contain more precise information with respect to that of the vulgate (*Cim.* 10.2). The Aristotelian evidence is not exploited when it does not agree with the moral interpretation of the individual formulated by Plutarch, on a basis, therefore, that is not historical but ethical-moral, according to the conception of Plutarch himself that his historical narration functions in the delineation of character (*ethos*).

It seems worth mentioning that in the context of Plutarch's knowledge of the *Constitution of the Athenians*, only a few citations result from direct use. One notes that the citations relayed as first hand all derive from chapters 25–28 of the treatise, i.e. the central ones, in reference to the political activity of Ephialtes and Pericles, which conclude with a brief historical digression. The particular attention reserved for these passages seems to indicate that Plutarch is focused on the central nucleus of the treatise, that in his interpretation he had to construct the significant part of the work.

The citations from the *Constitution of the Athenians* may be compared with those from the *Constitution of the Spartans* (6). All, except one, are concentrated in the *Life of Lycurgus*. The fragments inserted in the biography of Lycurgus deal with the legislative figure and activity of the statesman. The first is located right at the beginning of the biography (*Lyc.* 1.1) and concerns the chronology of the Spartan legislator. The mention of Aristotle opens a brief *status quaestionis*: although Plutarch leans toward the dating of Eratosthenes and Apollodorus (cf. *Lyc.* 29.10), he cites Aristotle, not only because he is an authoritative source, but also because his version is accompanied by the mention of documented data (the discus of Olympia).

The second citation follows shortly thereafter in *Lyc.* 5 and concerns the number of old men (*gerontes*). Again he reports the Aristotelian testimony, although he does not share it, but in this case he openly expresses his disapproval.

The fragment from the *Constitution of the Spartans* in *Lyc.* 6 refers to a topographical detail related to the *rhētra*. Also concerning this detail Plutarch refrains from agreeing with Aristotle. More important, however, is his disapproval, expressed in *Lyc.* 28, of Aristotle's attribution to Lycurgus of the *krypteia* and of cruelty toward the helots. Likewise in the case of Pericles (the death of Ephialtes), Plutarch does not agree with Aristotle's version because it contrasts with his own judgment on Lycurgus: that is, he does not refute the information on a documentary basis but for ethical and moral reasons.

In an analogous way, but with the opposite result, in *Lyc.* 31 instead he agrees with the version of the *Constitution of the Spartans*, because it is consistent with his portrait of the Spartan legislator; furthermore, the insertion of the Aristotelian testimony confirms the exemplary character of this personality. The citation in fact concludes the praise of Lycurgus: Aristotle's authority is here called upon to sanctify the greatness of the Spartan legislator, whose work surpasses that of every other Greek statesman.

The concentration of fragments taken from the *Constitution of the Spartans* in the *Life of Lycurgus* on one hand, and the admiration for such a figure and for the Spartan *kosmos* on the other, lead us to believe that Plutarch has a direct familiarity with Aristotle's work, although in and of itself this does not imply that all the citations are first hand. He would be interested in the ethico-moral portrait of Lycurgus delineated in the *Constitution of the Spartans* rather than in the documentary value of the treatise and the citations would not be introduced so much out of erudite or antiquarian curiosity as from the will to extract elements, even for the purpose of contesting them, for evaluation of the Spartan individual and order. It will be noted that in four cases (out of six) Plutarch demonstrates, more or less openly, his disapproval of the Aristotelian version: he includes, therefore, citations where he intends to put forward reservations regarding the testimony of the *Constitution of the Spartans*; in particular he refutes those versions that contradict his own portrait of the Spartan legislator. As for the fragments of the other *Politeiai* reported by Plutarch, these are made up mostly of isolated citations, nine in all referring to seven different constitutions.

In *Thes.* 16.2 the only fragment remaining for us is provided by the *Constitution of the Bottiaeans*, with the mention of the title of the treatise. The fragment deals with the ancient history of Athens (the relationship with the Minoan world): the mention of Aristotle's treatise is made in this context because the population of the Bottiaeans was thought to be of Athenian origin (descendants of young Athenians sent off to Minos).

In *Thes.* 3 a fragment is reported from a third *Constitution*, that of the Troezens, on the foundation of Troezen by Pittheus, grandfather of Theseus, and on the fame of Pittheus' wisdom. The fact that in the *Life of Theseus* two fragments are preserved that are derived from these *Constitutions*, that of the Bottiaeans and that of the Troezens, is an indication that Plutarch turned his attention to those treatises that had political-geographical links with the *Constitution of the Athenians*. The erudite curiosity for the minor *Constitutions* is connected therefore with the "Athenian" material that these treatises contain and was not so much sparked by the Aristotelian treatises themselves.

The only *Constitutions* of which Plutarch seems to have had a direct knowledge, however, appear to be those of the Athenians and the Spartans. In effect, thirteen of the twenty-two Plutarchan fragments derive from the *Constitution of the Athenians* (seven) and from the *Constitution of the Spartans* (six). Therefore, the interest in the Aristotelian collection appears not to have originated from mere antiquarian and constitutional motives, but rather assumes a precise historiographical value: Plutarch reaffirms with this choice his interpretation of Greek history, in which the *poleis* of Athens and Sparta occupy a position of importance also on the side of the laws, usages, and customs; they represent the cultural stature of Classical Greece and constitute as such the center of Plutarch's reflection on the Hellenic past.

7. Contemporary History: A Comparison of Plutarch and Tacitus

For Plutarch, born around 45 CE, the end of Nero and the internal wars of 68/69 must have constituted the first event of importance in which his era participated. The dating of the eight Imperial biographies is uncertain: today they tend to be located in the age of Domitian, that is, ahead of the *Parallel Lives*. From the *Lives of the Caesars* we possess only those of Galba and Otho, from which one infers – on the basis of the explanatory annotations of the Roman terms and customs that fill it – that the work must have been destined, in a non-exclusive way, for a Greek public. And it has already been noted how the biographies of Galba and Otho, together with the lost life of Vitellius, constitute a unified group, from reading them together rather than individually, a sort of general reflection on the years 68–69.

The two biographies represent, therefore, a precise document for clarifying a few aspects of Plutarch's thought on contemporary history. In the *Parallel Lives*, the relationship with the present is often articulated in an indirect and underlying way, through symbolic appeals and ideal references. In this case it deals with a reflection, from a short distance, on contemporary events in which individuals who were intimate with Plutarch were involved: the past events constituted a closed phase that the bloody civil wars rendered still vivid in memory and pressing in essential questions concerning imperial power.

In the *Parallel Lives* there is ample space for the agonizing era of the civil wars of the Late Republic, delineated in the optics of his protagonists, with the exception of Octavius. The role that Plutarch attributes to political actors and social forces in his portrait of Roman society of the Late Republic has repeatedly been the subject of discussion. It substantiates the essentially binary vision, the so-called “*boulé-demos* conflict,” that characterizes Plutarch's reconstruction of Roman politics in the second half of the first century BCE, which corresponds to a sort of inattentiveness toward political subjects such as the *equites*, the Italian *socii*, and the professional army.

The questions resulting from the conflicts that erupted in 68–69 are different, in the new context of the age of the principate: above all the problem of imperial investiture and the progressively greater weight in this area of the praetorian guard and the provincial armies. The entire biography of Galba is structured around the subject of the precariousness of imperial nomination.

In this context it is worthwhile to uncover the space and importance that Plutarch attributes, in the development of events, to a few figures who have different responsibilities within the Roman Empire but who are united by their role as advisors, either to the emperor in office or to his opponent. And yet they are presented in more than one instance as individuals who pull the strings in events and their presence, usually disastrous for the fate of the protagonist, characterizes Plutarch's tale with respect to other sources and conveys a particular understanding of the decision-making centers of the empire.

On this point the comparison with Tacitus is illuminating. One example will suffice: in Plutarch's narration of events at the beginning of the *Life of Galba*, the decisive role is played initially by Gaius Nymphidius Sabinus, the prefect of the praetorian guard, whose

portrait Plutarch suffuses with rich detail, beginning with his humble origins. It is Nymphidius who convinces the troops to proclaim Galba as emperor (*Galb.* 1–2): he becomes the arbiter of politics in Rome, maneuvering the praetorians and the senate (*Galb.* 8). In Tacitus, the role of Nymphidius is barely mentioned. In the *Historiae* 1.5–1.2 the rebellion of the soldiers against Nero is attributed, in a generic way, to external intrigues and instigations: the account alludes to Nymphidius, but the individual is named only at the conclusion of the chapter to clarify that, in conjunction with other reasons, the praetorians were placed in turmoil “by the villainy of [their] commander Nymphidius Sabinus, who was aiming for the Empire.” One glimpses the role of Nymphidius himself, but Tacitus does not insist on this, indeed stresses that he was quickly eliminated; the next few subsequent references are entirely in passing.

In support of the weight Plutarch attaches to these figures, two observations may be made. First, in *Galba* 13.2 he reports an episode not mentioned in the other sources: Nymphidius rallies his officers in order for them to abandon Galba, but despite his efforts the praetorians do not defect. If it is true that this episode demonstrates the limit of Nymphidius’ actions, and, by analogy, of those actions undertaken by individuals like him, it nevertheless reveals also how these figures with a past as dark as their present are, for Plutarch, the true drivers of civil wars, even more so than the armies. Moreover, the episode confirms that the interlocutors, custodians of the power to nominate an emperor, are the military, not the senate: the armies hold the power of investiture, but the circumstances under which this power is wielded are determined, in more than one case, by the machinations of the “advisors” who surround the emperor, or the person who aspires to become emperor.

The second consideration consists of the fact that it is truly the dark “advisors” who provoke the *metabolê* of the designated emperor, even when he – as in the case of Galba – represents a worthy candidate. Even Nero is considered to be a victim of the changes provoked by Tigellinus, which have transformed him into a tyrant, thus sealing his fate: the tyrannicide is justified, but above all the tyrant is rendered so nefarious by the deeds of his advisor. The warning to the emperor in power is not excluded from a similar portrait, perhaps to be recognized as referring to Domitian.

Another difference with respect to Tacitus comes about from the perspective in which the conflicts of 68–69 are inserted: in Plutarch links are not established with the civil wars of the Republican age, nor are allusions made that are worthy of interpretive comment. The connection is instead proposed in Tacitus and frequently reprised, in a way that is not marginal, so as to represent a point of reference that is constant in his narrative. It is generally believed that Plutarch and Tacitus depended on a common source: the silence of the former, in comparison with the explicit paragons of the Republican age depicted in the latter, seems, therefore, to be in response to selective interpretation.

In Plutarch’s thought there is a rupture between the Republican and the Imperial periods. The events of the first do not constitute a point of reference for those of the second. Indirect confirmation is given on the one hand by the privileged relationship established between the events of 68–69 and the first Hellenistic period, and on the other hand by the allusive valor of a few portraits of individuals in the *Parallel Lives*, reinterpreted against the backdrop of contemporary topics. The connection is not historical but is articulated on a symbolic level in order to highlight the heroes of his own time.

The interpretation of the Imperial age is carried out in the biographies of Galba and Otho through the model of the courts of the Hellenistic *basileis*, surrounded by *philoi* and advisors. Plutarch captures the difference between imperial power and Hellenistic kingship: the second is dynastic and independently legitimized, the first is subject to legitimization by numerous political subjects who were often in conflict. The biographer dedicates considerable space to the adoption of Piso by Galba, grasping the novelty of the situation. Despite the “choice of the best” – as he must observe – this is not sufficient to guarantee the empire of Galba; rather, it will be the most immediate motive for its crisis and precipitous end. Plutarch wrote the *Life of Galba* when the dynastic policy was in force, and his pages seem to take note of the absence of an alternative, although he will greet optimistically the choice of the “best prince” made in the case of Trajan.

Plutarch is aware of the differences in the procedures of legitimization in the Imperial age and in the Hellenistic epoch, but the absence of a Roman perspective, the role attributed to the *philoi*, the framing of the facts in a Greek–Hellenistic horizon propose an interpretation to readers of the dynamics in play in Rome by analogy to the model constructed by the Hellenistic courts. As a matter of fact, the Imperial *Lives* are contemporaneous with the biographies of Aratus and Artaxerxes. These two move within the political horizon of the Hellenistic age. The *Life of Aratus*, notoriously well documented on the basis of the *Memoirs* of the protagonist, has among its themes the function of the “advisor,” to the extent that the success of the individual is due, from his very first undertakings, to the advice of trusted friends. In the *Life of Artaxerxes*, the king’s court is retrospectively modeled on the eastern components of the court of Alexander the Great, to whom Plutarch had already dedicated at least two treatises, *On Alexander’s Fortune or Virtue I and II* (*De Alexandri fortuna aut virtute*). The chronological coincidence between these *Lives* and those of Galba and Otho explains the transposition of some Hellenistic motives into the Imperial history of Rome; Plutarch did not return again to the facts of 68–69: his reflection on the fateful year was resolved in the immediacy of the events. Therefore, Plutarch’s vision is not yet that of a Greek who looks to the Roman world to bring together the interconnections between the two souls that constitute the empire, whose formulation is accomplished in the *Parallel Lives*. The biographer is still a Greek who looks to Rome as the place of political power and attempts to reconstruct the dynamics of the facts, to grasp the movers and the actors, with an attentive eye to the interests, expectations, and cultural horizon of the Hellenized elite.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For a general overview of Plutarch, consult the now classic treatments by Ziegler ((1951) = (1964)) and Russell (1973); in relation to his own time, see Barrow (1967) and Jones (1971), to which may be added the contributions presented at the ninth and tenth Plutarchan conferences in Gallo (2009) and Volpe Cacciatore and Ferrari (2007) respectively. For an overview of Plutarchan biographies see Wardman (1974); on the ethical position, Duff (1999) is read in particular; on the historical method of Plutarch, the writings of Stadter (1965) and Pelling (2002) are illuminating. The commentaries are helpful in understanding the biographies, such as that by Frost (1980) on the *Life of Themistocles* or Stadter's (1989) commentary on the *Life of Pericles*, to mention two of the most famous works.

CHAPTER 29

Tragedy and the Hero

Judith Mossman

So it is clear that one should not show virtuous men passing from good to bad fortune, since this does not arouse fear or pity, but only a sense of outrage. Nor should one show bad men passing from bad to good fortune, as this is less tragic than anything, since it has none of the necessary requirements; it neither satisfies our human feeling nor arouses pity and fear. Nor should one show a quite wicked man passing from good to bad fortune; it is true that such an arrangement would satisfy our human feeling, but it would not arouse pity or fear, since the one is felt for someone who comes to grief without deserving it, and the other for someone like us (pity, that is, for the man who does not deserve his fate, and fear for someone like us); so this event will not arouse pity or fear. So we have left the man between these. He is one who is not pre-eminent in moral virtue, who passes to bad fortune not through vice or wickedness, but because of some piece of ignorance, and who is of high repute and great good fortune, like Oedipus and Thyestes and the splendid men of such families.

Aristotle, *Poetics* 13 (tr. Hubbard)

Ismenias the Theban used to exhibit both good and bad players to his pupils on the flute and say, "you must play like this one," or again, "you must not play like this one"; and Antigenidas used to think that young men would listen with more pleasure to good flute-players if they were given an experience of bad ones also. So, I think, we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad. This book will therefore contain the Lives of Demetrius the City-besieger and Antony the Emperor, men who bore most ample testimony to the truth of Plato's saying that great natures exhibit great vices also, as well as great virtues.

Plutarch, *Demetrius* 1.6–7

It is not known whether Aristotle's *Poetics* was available to Plutarch, or what he would have thought of it. One respect, though, in which these two quotations reflect similar concerns is in observing the potential for emotional satisfaction combined with moral

instruction latent in the stories of great men, even, indeed especially, great men who are not perfect. The use of tragedy in Plutarch's *Lives* to delineate character and to provide a set of conceptual tools for the reader to make sense of what happens to Plutarch's heroes and to draw their own moral lessons from their experiences has been discussed with regard to several *Lives*. A type of tragic patterning, quite distinct from the concept of "tragic history" applied to some of the more sensationalist Hellenistic historians (see Mossman (1988) 92; Braund (1993) 468), has been identified as a prominent feature in *Demetrius*, *Antony*, *Alexander*, *Pyrrhus*, *Crassus*, and *Pompey* (see the Guide to Further Reading for bibliography).

In some cases tragedy (usually marked by imagery or metaphors from the theater or by quotation of or reference to tragic performance) can be seen as juxtaposed with other genres (epic and comedy are the clearest examples) in order to create a more rounded or shaded characterization for the hero. *Alexander* is a clear example of this; the technique is also deployed in *Pyrrhus*, *Demetrius*, and, alongside other methods of characterization, *Antony*. So Alexander's character can be seen as worked out through a series of intertextual references to tragedy, created by quotation, narrative patterning, theatrical vocabulary, and sometimes reference to Dionysus, the god of tragedy. Theatrical and tragic imagery can also be employed less systematically to suggest deceit or pretense or to heighten the emotion of suitable moments. But the choice of tragic patterning makes a big impression on the mode of narrative in a *Life*: the question therefore arises, why use it in some *Lives* and not in others? Why, for example, is tragic patterning so much more prominent in *Crassus* than in *Nicias*, especially given the affinities between Thucydides' narrative of the Sicilian Expedition and tragedy (Macleod (1983) 140–158)? There is clearly more scope for tragic patterning in *Pompey* than in *Agesilaus*, because of the differing career trajectories of those two subjects, but there are some heroes whose *Lives* suggest tragedy whom tragic imagery does not surround: why is there no sustained tragic feeling in *Theseus* (despite his actually being a character in a number of tragedies)? Why not more in *Themistocles*? In *Alcibiades*? Rather than rehearse again the clearest examples of tragic patterning in the *Lives*, this chapter will look at some of the harder cases, and see what they can tell us about tragedy and the Plutarchan hero.

There is in fact a strong tragic presence in *Theseus*, but of an unusual and complex kind: tragedy is constantly in the process of being banished. Pelling ((2002) 199) has noted that the rejection of tragic versions in favor of historical ones recurs throughout the *Life* as part of the distancing of the pair as a whole from mythology, prepared for in *Theseus* 1.1–2. The choice of heroes is announced with an adapted – one might almost say garbled – quotation from Aeschylus (*Seven Against Thebes*, a mixture of 435 and elements from 395–396). Tragedy is already being rewritten. At 3.2 Euripides can still be a source for the virtue of Pittheus, but at 15.2, 16.3, 29.1, and 29.4 the truthfulness of tragedy is challenged not only by history but also by epic, and when we reach *Romulus*, tragedy has been wholly purged from the pair. Indeed, even where it seems probable that Plutarch is actually summarizing material from tragedy, such matter is narrated without tragic coloring: for example, the material on Aegeus and Medea in 12 probably comes from either Sophocles' or Euripides' *Aegeus*, but is deliberately told in a matter-of-fact and unpoetic style. At times tragedy is not contradicted by history, but simply tacitly rewritten, as at 3.3, where the oracle given to Aegeus is quoted not from Euripides' *Medea* (679, 681), but in a hexameter version, and Aegeus asks Pittheus to interpret it,

not Medea, as in Euripides. This constant introduction of tragedy in order to modify it, correct it, or reject it outright is appropriate in the light of the Platonic background of the pair (on which see Pelling (2002) 178–181, 185–187). Yet, as Pelling also observes ((2002) 199), Theseus is to some extent unavoidably a tragic figure, and by referring allusively to the subject-matter of Euripides' *Hippolytus* at 28.3 and in the *synkrisis* (3.2), Plutarch acknowledges this, however grudgingly: "As for the calamities which befell Phaedra and the son of Theseus by Antiope, since there is no conflict here between historians and tragic poets, we must suppose that they happened as they have all represented." But the reference in the *synkrisis* is so phrased as to rob the events of their tragic grandeur, as if in a final denial of the tragic nature of Theseus: "but the anger of Theseus did not progress beyond words of abuse and an old man's curse, and in other ways the young man seems to have had bad luck." This contributes to an argument figuring Theseus as less culpable than Romulus, but still eschews the obvious urge to show Theseus as tragic. The presentation of Theseus as a culture hero on a par with Heracles takes precedence over the story's tragic elements; although the basic tale of a hero destroyed by his passions is not eliminated, it is transmuted into a more political, less elemental narrative to suit Plutarch's strategy of subtly updating Theseus and Romulus and incorporating elements into their *Lives* reminiscent of much more recent times (on which see Pelling (2002) 180–185).

Themistocles, on the other hand, seems to have struck Plutarch as a character who positively resisted classification as tragic. Although he could be seen as tragically ruined by his own success, and at 2.2 is described as having a "great nature" (on which see Duff (1999) 62), like those two very tragic heroes Demetrius and Antony, Themistocles' presentation is generally much more that of a trickster-figure. There is some use of tragedy in *Themistocles*, but it subtly accents certain crucial moments rather than providing a tragic framework for the narrative. It enhances aspects of the characterization of Themistocles without providing a consistent strand in it. Perhaps Themistocles' own indifference to the arts (2.4) plays a part in making tragic patterning less appropriate for portraying him. An Odyssean cunning and high ambition are the characteristics that predominate in the early chapters (cf. e.g. 1.3, 5.2, and this is reprised later, e.g. at 29.2). His activity as choregus at 5.5 prefigures greater things, when at 10.1 he uses the oracle to deceive the Athenians for their own benefit: "Then indeed it was that Themistocles, despairing of bringing the multitude over to his views by any human reasonings, set up a plot/the machine [*mechanen*: i.e. the crane on which divine figures in tragedies appear] just as in a tragedy and brought to bear upon them signs from heaven and oracles." The use of a theatrical image here might be an example of the frequent use of tragic imagery to convey deceit, but coming after the more straightforward account of Themistocles' choregia, the passage contrives to suggest not so much Themistocles' duplicity as his skills as an impresario. He works backstage ("set up the plot/crane" – a cunning ambiguity not entirely resolved until the mention of divine signs suggests the meaning "crane" is uppermost, since the word can also mean a plot-device in a play) and the audience drinks in the theatrical effect.

The defining event of the *Life*, the victory at Salamis, is marked with reference to Dionysus the Eater of Raw Flesh, the god of tragedy himself, to whom Themistocles must perform a human sacrifice (common in drama, rare and perhaps nonexistent outside it). At this crucial moment, though, the choregus Themistocles suddenly finds himself cast

in the role of Agamemnon in Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis*: "Themistocles was terrified, feeling that the word of the seer was monstrous and shocking; but the multitude, who, as is wont to be the case in great struggles and severe crises, looked for safety rather from unreasonable than from reasonable measures, invoked the god with one voice, dragged the prisoners to the altar, and compelled the fulfillment of the sacrifice, as the seer commanded" (13.4). There is no other source for this event (though Plutarch recounts it again at *Arist.* 9.1–2 and *Pel.* 21.3: see Marr (1998) on 13.2 and Frost (1980) 150). As Plutarch has inserted it at the cost of a chronological inconcinnity (how were the prisoners acquired before the battle began? At *Arist.* 9.2 they are said to have been captured at Psyttaleia, an action which began after the naval battle), it cannot be an accident that there is an undertone here of loss of control on the part both of Themistocles and of the Greek army, or that that is expressed in terms of the Dionysiac and the tragic. The great victory is not allowed to be overshadowed by it for long: the use in the next chapter of Aeschylus as evidence for the number of barbarian ships is less a tragic marker than a respectful reference to an eyewitness to a world-changing event.

It is later, when Themistocles is out of favor, that he next plays a tragic part, but once again, it is marked as such less by the unmistakable theatrical references we find in other *Lives* as by a strong resemblance to one of Euripides' most famous plots: in 24, Themistocles supplicates Admetus in exactly the same way as Euripides represented Telephus supplicating Agamemnon. In Euripides, Telephus seems to have acted on Clytemnestra's advice (according to Hyginus *fab.* 101); here we duly find the detail (24.5): "Some, it is true, say that it was Phthia, the wife of the king, who suggested this form of supplication to Themistocles, and that she seated her son on the hearth with him." (It is true that this detail is also found at Thuc. 1.136, but that does not lessen the link to tragedy, often made in connection with Thucydides' account as well: see Hornblower (1991) on that passage.) And the end of Plutarch's sentence confirms the feeling of *déjà vu* that has been growing throughout the account: "...and certain others that Admetus himself, in order that he might give a religious reason to the pursuers for the necessity of not surrendering the man, arranged and joined in the performance (*suntragoidesai*) of the supplication scene." This is indeed a scene from *Telephus*; and in his flight Themistocles has become an actor to be directed rather than one who arranges the performance himself.

There is one final reference to tragedy, which echoes Themistocles' activity before Salamis (32.4): "Phylarchus, too, when, as if in a tragedy, he all but erects a theatrical machine in his history, and brings into the action a certain Neocles and Demopolis, sons of Themistocles, wishes merely to stir up tumultuous emotion; anyone would know this story is fabricated." The phrase used is exactly the same as that at 10.1; but its repetition points a contrast: Phylarchus is only seeking to (over)excite his readers, and not, like Themistocles, to achieve a practical political victory. Where Themistocles erected his machine for divine signs and oracles, Phylarchus puts his up to bring on spurious offspring of Themistocles. But in a way this echo has the effect of magnifying Themistocles' achievement in retrospect. Not all theatricality is the same.

Alcibiades is another example of a *Life* where tragic and theatrical elements are present but not persistent. Duff ((1999) 221) actually describes Alcibiades' fate as "a tragedy," Verdegem ((2010) 351) heads his chapter on *Alc.* 35–9 "A Tragic Downfall," and indeed one might have expected a much more insistent pulse of tragic imagery in this *Life*; but perhaps Alcibiades' elusiveness, his resistance to categorization so well

discussed by Duff ((1999) 229–240), in itself discouraged any monotonic use of tragedy to describe him. The opening of the *Life* appears to set up a tragic link to Ajax as it traces Alcibiades' lineage back to Eurysaces (so at *Alex.* 2.1 Alexander's lineage is traced back both to Heracles and to Aeacus and Neoptolemus), but this is not followed through: as Verdegem argues ((2010) 100–101), the import of this statement may well be more suggestive of the Platonic Alcibiades. A tragic quotation, though, rounds off the section on his beauty, and another probably marks his subjection to Socrates (4.3: see Duff (1999) 226, and now Verdegem (2010) 145). And tragic quotations also sum up one of the key contradictions in his nature at 23.7–9 (on which see Duff (1999) 236–237). Duff is certainly right to stress that both quotations introduce the idea of gender transgression as a leitmotif in Alcibiades' character: one might perhaps go even further and suggest that the second, “(he) is the same woman as always” (Eur. *Or.* 129), originally said by Electra of Helen, figures Alcibiades as, like Helen, beautiful but essentially destructive (and see also Verdegem (2010) 280 on the link in ancient thought between effeminacy and adultery). Described as Helen, Alcibiades is playing Paris to Agis' Menelaus. Destructive beauty in itself is not really an attribute of a tragic hero. Yet later, at 32.1–3, when Alcibiades returns from exile, the narrative once again plays with tragedy: “But Alcibiades, yearning now to see his home, and still more desirous of being seen by his fellow citizens, now that he had conquered their enemies so many times, set sail. ... Duris the Samian, who claims that he was a descendant of Alcibiades, gives some additional details. He says that Chrysogonus the Pythian victor played the aulos for the rowers; and that Callippides the tragic actor called the time; that both these artists were arrayed in their long tunics, flowing robes, and other competition adornment; and that the commander's ship put into harbors with a sail of purple, as though, after a drinking bout, he were off on a revel. But neither Theopompus, nor Ephorus, nor Xenophon mentions these things, nor is it likely that Alcibiades put on such airs for the Athenians, to whom he was returning after he had suffered exile and many great adversities. In fact, he was in actual fear as he put into the harbor, and once in, he did not leave his trireme until, as he stood on deck, he caught sight of his cousin Eurypolemus on shore, with many other friends and kinsmen, and heard their cries of welcome.” Alcibiades wants to be watched, like an actor in a play; in Duris' account he makes a grand, theatrical, and somewhat Dionysiac entrance to the music of the tragic instrument, the aulos, and the tones of a tragic actor. Plutarch punctures that image, though the account he then gives of Alcibiades' ecstatic reception shows that Alcibiades' desire for spectators is fulfilled: “those who could not come to him gazed at him (*etheonto*) from afar” (32.4). This rejection of an alternative version and the resulting uncertainty as to whether Alcibiades is properly penitent or his old outrageous self is in keeping with other places in the *Life* where Plutarch's authorial comments complicate his picture of Alcibiades' moral standing (on which see Duff (1999) 234). But is being destroyed by your own reputation, as Plutarch says Alcibiades is (35.2, see Duff (1999) 238; Pelling (2000) esp. 52–55) quite tragic? Destroyed by your own virtues, yes, but destroyed by what people think of you? Perhaps the accounts of Alcibiades' death, though magnificently vivid and with all the pathos of a fine Euripidean messenger speech (the death of Neoptolemus in *Andromache* has some of the same strengths), are not marked as strictly tragic because Alcibiades, for all his grand passions, is too much of a chameleon (Duff's term (1999) 235), too much unlike the stubborn and unchanging Ajax, in fact.

But Plutarch's use of tragedy is often far from expected. In *Nicias/Crassus* there was a clear Thucydidean precedent for a tragic treatment of Nicias, who "of all the Hellenes in my time, least deserved such a fate, seeing that the whole course of his life had been regulated with strict attention to virtue" (7.86: on the difference between the Thucydidean tragedy and the Plutarchan tragedy of Nicias see Pelling (2002) 130–131). Plutarch does deliberately distance himself from Thucydides and imitators of Thucydides at the start of *Nicias*, but given the *Life's* subject-matter it is still surprising that tragedy is used so much less consistently in *Nicias* than at the end of *Crassus*. There is a similar play to that in *Themistocles* between the experience of being a successful choregus and being metaphorically produced: at 3.3 Plutarch talks of a temple surviving until his own day surmounted by Nicias' choregic tripods (on this building see Wilson (2000) 228–229). Nicias is not just undefeated in war until the disaster in Sicily, he is undefeated in tragic competition. Plutarch adds: "For he was often victorious with choruses, and was never defeated. A story is told how, in one of his choral exhibitions, a house servant of his appeared in the costume of Dionysus, very fair to see, and very tall, the down of youth still upon his face. The Athenians were delighted at the sight, and applauded for a long time. At last Nicias rose and said he deemed it an unholy thing that one who had been acclaimed as a god should be a slave, and gave the youth his freedom." This is a strange little story. It is not easily explained as belonging to a straightforward tragic production, since the choregus did not supply actors and it was not normal for slaves to act. But what it does express very clearly is the power of the choregus (see Wilson (2000) 138: "The *khoregia* is here very clearly a site of power for the individual who can reduce the gap between slave and god").

It is very specifically his power which the next tragic image reverses, at 5.2–4: "The man who most aided him in playing this role (*suntragoidon*), and helped him to assume his costume of pompous dignity (*sumperititheis ongon*), was Hiero. He had been reared in the household of Nicias, and thoroughly instructed by him in letters and literature. He pretended to be the son of Dionysius, surnamed Chalcus, whose poems are indeed extant, and who, as leader of the colonizing expedition to Italy, founded Thurii. This Hiero it was who managed for Nicias his secret dealings with the seers, and who was forever putting about among the people moving tales about the life of severe hardships which his patron led for the sake of the city. 'Why!' said he, 'even when he takes his bath and when he eats his dinner, some public business or other is sure to confront him; he neglects his private interests in his anxiety for the common good, and scarcely gets to sleep till others wake. That's the reason why he is physically all run down, and is not affable or pleasant to his friends, indeed, he has actually lost these as well, in addition to his substance, and all in the service of the city. Other public men not only win friends but enrich themselves through their influence as public speakers, and then fare sumptuously, and make a plaything of the service of the city.' In point of fact, such was the life of Nicias that he could say of himself what Agamemnon did: 'Indeed, as master of my life, My pomp I have, and (or: but – the text is uncertain) to the populace I'm a slave.'" Hiero, like the boy who played Dionysus in the previous anecdote, is one of Nicias' household. But where Nicias orchestrated the previous show and used it as a demonstration of power, Hiero orchestrates Nicias. And yet, although the opening of the anecdote prepares the reader to hear that this is all pretense, at the end Plutarch uses a tragic quotation to assert that Hiero was right: Nicias, playing Agamemnon just as Themistocles had,

really is a slave to the populace. His pomp, his costume (*ongkos* in both places – and see also 15.2) is like the slave's Dionysus costume; it covers up a lack of power, and perhaps also a lack of personal substance.

The paradox that Nicias appears to have power without really having it is very important for Plutarch's understanding of Nicias (and rather different from the way tragedy is used in *Crassus*); it reflects aspects of Thucydides' understanding of Nicias as a man who has a tiger – the Athenian demos – by the tail. The use of a fragment of Euripides' *Erechtheus* at 9.5 to describe the longing for peace which makes Nicias so popular when he arranges it seems straightforward; but it is likely there are multiple ironies here. The fragment in full reads (as we know from Stobaeus): "Let my spear lie idle for spiders to weave their webs on it. May I live in tranquility, dwelling with grey old age, and crown my grey head with garlands and sing songs, after hanging a Thracian shield upon Athena's columned halls; and may I unfold the voice of the tablets through which the wise are renowned." It is probable that this ode is sung by the chorus after Erechtheus departs for battle; in the play, then, this wish for peace is succeeded not by peace but by war, and a war in which Erechtheus himself is, like his Thracian adversary Eumolpus, killed. The quotation, then, for readers who know the context, suggests the collapse of peace even as it speaks of longing for it and even at the moment of his greatest political triumph implies the failure of Nicias (and perhaps his ultimate death, too). It could be argued that Plutarch took the quotation out of context and did not mean for it to be recalled; but the material later in the *Life* on the importance of knowing Euripides by heart (29.2, a story not taken from Thucydides) might retrospectively encourage a contextualized reading here.

Indeed Euripides specifically is the tragedian who fills this *Life* (Sophocles makes a cameo appearance at 15.2, but in his capacity as general). Euripides composes an epitaph for the fallen quoted at 17.4; reciting Euripides saves lives where Nicias' own appeal at 27.4 to Gylippus to remember past kindnesses (in direct speech) fails to do so. Not only are some Athenians released from slavery for reciting him (29.2); others are fed for singing some of his odes. A Caunian ship is admitted freely to the harbor of Syracuse, which not all Nicias' efforts could breach, because the Caunians can sing some Euripides. The power of Euripides' words contrasts starkly with the final chapter, where ordinary language fails at first to communicate this huge disaster: "The Athenians, they say, put no faith in the first tidings of the calamity, most of all because of the messenger who brought them. A certain stranger, as it would seem, landed at the Piraeus, took a seat in a barber's shop, and began to discourse of what had happened as if the Athenians already knew all about it. The barber, on hearing this, before others learned of it, ran at the top of his speed to the upper city, accosted the archons, and at once set the story going in the marketplace. Consternation and confusion reigned, naturally, and the archons convened an assembly and brought the man before it. But, on being asked from whom he had learned the matter, he was unable to give any clear answer, and so it was decided that he was a story-maker (*logopoios*), and was trying to throw the city into an uproar. He was therefore fastened to the wheel and racked a long time, until messengers came with the actual facts of the whole disaster. So hard was it for the Athenians to believe that Nicias had suffered the fate which he had often foretold to them." The tragic messenger is a familiar figure, not least in the plays of Euripides. Tragic messengers often recite very remarkable, even supernatural events, but they are nonetheless invariably believed, unlike

the barber. A *logopoios* not only denotes a gossip, it also refers to prose writing; the Athenians, it seems, are more open to fictional messengers in tragedy than to prosaic fact. The barber arouses one of the emotions Aristotle associates with the effect of tragedy, *ekplexis* (*Poet.* 1454a4, of the horror a tragic character who has done something in ignorance realizes what has happened, glossed at *Top.* 126b14 as “an excess of astonishment”), but unlike most tragic messengers he has only heard the story second hand rather than seen it himself, and only the advent of others can convince his audience. Not even Nicias himself, it seems from the final sentence, could convince the Athenians.

Euripides also comes to dominate the end of *Crassus*. The role of tragedy in *Crassus* has been examined by both Braund (1993) and Zadorojnyi (1997), both of whom refer to the parallel importance of Euripides at the end of *Nicias* ((1993) 469; (1997) 180). Zadorojnyi stresses that tragedy in *Crassus* is juxtaposed with, indeed comes to extinguish, epic and its virtues; Braund argues that Crassus is treated more and more like the Pentheus of Euripides’ *Bacchae* throughout the Carrhae narrative until at last his head becomes part of a performance of that play at the Parthian court. Both treatments make important points, but there is perhaps more to be said. It seems particularly important that in this pair of *Lives*, perhaps more than any other, there is above all an increasing emphasis on tragic performance as the pair, indeed as each *Life*, progresses. We have seen how in the *Nicias* it is specifically performance of Euripides which saves the Athenian prisoners. In the *Crassus* tragedy may be foreshadowed by the Dionysiac prophecies of Spartacus’ wife (Zadorojnyi (1997) 176 and n. 35; *Crass.* 8.4); but there is no quotation of tragedy at all until the final scene, and none of the theatrical metaphors found in *Nicias*. There is tragic (or at least tragic epic) allusion in the despair of Nicias at 27.6, which recalls Priam after the death of Hector (Zadorojnyi (1997) 178); but it is only after the death of Crassus that the tragic coloring becomes insistent. (Braund ((1993) 472–473) suggests a number of comparisons between Euripides’ Pentheus and Plutarch’s Crassus, and he too sees an intensification of these resemblances to a tragedy as the *Life* nears its close.) In 32.1–3 (on which see also Braund (1993) 473), Surena orchestrates a mock triumph, with a Crassus look-alike costumed as a woman and “taught” to answer to Crassus’ name. There may be a hint of the production of a tragedy in this term *didachtheis*, which was used to describe the instruction of the chorus by the playwright – Crassus’ hapless stand-in is directed by Surena, the author of the spectacle. But tragedy is mixed with comedy in this chapter – a sick, black humor, but described with the terms associated with Old Comedy, tragedy’s shadow in the dramatic festivals at Athens. The procession, which mocks a Roman triumph, is *geloian*, “laughable”; the assumption of a woman’s clothing recalls not only Pentheus but also Euripides’ kinsman in Aristophanes’ *Women at the Thesmophoria*; the captive lictors who head the procession are given grimly comic props, purses and decapitated Roman heads; the courtesans who follow make music which is *bomolocha kai gelioia*, scurrilous and laughable. *Bomolochos*, and its cognates, is a typically comic term (see e.g. Aristophanes’ *Frogs* 358, 1085); and the language used of the audience of the procession (*pantes etheonto*, “all were spectators”) also confirms its perverted theatricality.

But the end of the chapter, which tends to be ignored, is in fact very important for our reading of the final, most tragic, section. The comic spectacle is for the masses; Surena has another entertainment in mind for the Seleucian *gerousia*. Roscius, one of the dead Romans, had some erotic literature in his baggage, Aristides’ *Milesian Tales*, and Surena makes much of the Romans’ debased literary taste. Plutarch continues as follows: “The

people of Seleucia, however, appreciated the wisdom of Aesop when they saw Surena with a wallet of obscenities from the *Milesian Tales* in front of him, but trailing behind him a Parthian Sybaris in so many wagon-loads of concubines. After a fashion his train was a counterpart to the fabled echidnae and scytalae among serpents, by showing its conspicuous and forward portions fearful and savage, with spears, archery, and horse, but trailing off in the rear of the line into dances, cymbals, lutes, and nocturnal revels with women. Roscius was certainly culpable, but it was shameless in the Parthians to find fault with the *Milesian Tales* when many of the royal line of their Arsacidae were sprung from Milesian and Ionian courtesans.” Other forms of Greek culture enable the Seleucians to interpret Surena’s activities not as he wishes, but in such a way as to prepare a moral lesson for the reader. The Aesopian fable referred to here is that of the two wallets, carried by all mankind, one in front containing the faults of others, which is fully visible to the one who carries it, one behind containing the bearer’s own, which are therefore never obvious to him or her. Roscius may have liked reading dirty books, but Surena, the Seleucians realize (and towards the end of the passage, the authorial voice confirms), is living them. The image of the snake, ferocious at the front but with a long tail of Dionysiac but unwarlike revelers, turns Surena’s comic procession against him (it may suggest a dithyramb: see d’Angour (1997) 342 on the resemblance of dithyrambs to snakes). If the abuse the courtesans sing is characteristic of Old Comedy, the courtesans themselves are typical characters in New Comedy. So the “popular” Greek genres of comedy and fable are used to suggest that the Parthians are not so different from the Romans they have defeated.

This remarkable level of Hellenism among the Parthians sets the scene for the twisted culture of the Parthian court (rightly stressed by Zadorojnyi (1997) 181–182). Despite the educated participants, Hyrodes (“ignorant of neither the Greek language nor Greek writings”) and Artavasdes, who “actually composed tragedies and wrote orations and histories, some of which are preserved,” many things are wrong with this production. It is dinner-theater, presumably not a full performance, but edited highlights performed by one actor and a chorus, a maimed version of the original. The actor Jason of Tralles was singing “the part about Agave from Euripides’ *Bacchae*,” but had evidently just finished part of his performance because Sillaces, the messenger entrusted with the head at 32.1, arrives “while he was being held in honor.” Sillaces’ *proskynesis* before he tosses the head into the middle of the room strikes a barbarian note in the midst of all this Hellenism. The head is handed around the hall, which adds to the sense of barbarism in the midst of civilization. At this point we encounter a problem. Plutarch says: “Then Jason handed *ta men tou Pentheos skeuopoimata* to one of the chorus, seized the head of Crassus, and behaving like a bacchant (*anabakheusas*), sang these verses through as if inspired.” This seems on any analysis to represent a disruption of the performance. The translators from Amyot onwards (with the honorable exception of the Budé) represent it as extreme: Jason, they say, changes his costume from that of Pentheus to Agave. Why Jason has been dressed as Pentheus if he has been singing about Agave is unclear: if he was singing the part of the play before her entrance, he should have been dressed as a chorus member, not as Pentheus. Pentheus does not sing about Agave. In fact he does not sing in *Bacchae* at all. Probably the word usually translated as costume, *skeuopoimata*, should in fact be translated as “prop” and understood not as Jason’s costume but as the stage-prop (no doubt a mask) used for the head of Pentheus. But there is still an oddity. That interpretation either implies an actor who is playing both the chorus and Agave (who has

been singing *Bacch.* 1153–1163, the chorus' reaction to the messenger speech) and who has therefore been carrying Pentheus' prop head before he should have been, or else one who is playing Agave and at the change of head goes back over what he has already sung. The continuity error underlines not only that this is not a full performance, but also the fact that when the actor changes the property master's mask-head for a real one he moves the performance into a register profoundly disturbing for a Platonist author like Plutarch, or even an Aristotelian one. The imagined becomes literal in a dangerous and transgressive way. Hence Plutarch's punning use of the term "behaving like a bacchant." Agave is a bacchant in the play, albeit a deluded rather than a reverent one. But the term also implies a degree of maddened frenzy, an unholy ecstasy. The paper-thin dramatic illusion is ruptured altogether when the actor, following the text of the play, claims credit for the kill: but then the true killer of Crassus, Pomaxathres, leaps up and takes back the head, "feeling that it was more appropriate for him to say these things than for Jason." Audience participation should have no part in Greek tragedy. The tragic emotions of pity and fear are replaced with savage delight. Greek *paideia* in the form of tragedy is perverted to the point of horror (see also Zadorojnyi (1997) 181–182).

But the final part of the final chapter confirms that Crassus is not the only victim here; that the point of this ghastly pantomime is not only, or perhaps even mainly, the downfall of a Plutarchan hero, as it might have been if Plutarch had chosen the version of Crassus' death found in Dio (40.27.3, discussed by Braund (1993) 471), where the Parthians pour molten gold into his mouth in mockery of his greed, just as Cyrus' decapitated head is pushed into a bucket of blood by Tomyris at Herodotus 1.214. Rather, this use of tragedy seems aimed at characterizing the audience rather than the decapitated Crassus. What people are these who so misunderstand the text of Euripides? Whereas the Syracusans in the West were softened by the power of poetry, the barbarian Parthians cannot understand it except in a literal way (for a similar reading see Zadorojnyi (1997) 182: "Plutarch's Parthians are dangerously violent readers of Euripides"). When Plutarch says, "To such a finale did the generalship of Crassus come, just like a tragedy," he seems to include the Parthians in the cast (for similar vocabulary see *Pel.* 34.1). It is perhaps relevant here that Surena's procession is described as like a snake. At *Bacch.* 1155, just before Agave's entrance, the chorus sing of Pentheus as the offspring of the snake, and refer to Agave's hymn of victory being transformed into tears. We readers thought Crassus (or the Roman playing him) resembled Pentheus, but it seems Surena does too, ominously enough.

The delighted king rewards both the audience member and the actor richly; but in the end he will take part in his own real-life tragedy, killing Surena in jealousy, losing one son in battle just as Crassus did, and being murdered by another (see also Zadorojnyi (1997) 181). "What has this got to do with Dionysus?" was the cry of a dissatisfied Athenian theater audience. Hyrodes is punished for his cruelty, his *omotes*, a word connected with *omestes*, the cult-title of Dionysus meaning Eater of Raw Flesh we saw in *Themistocles*. A god may be cruel, but a man should not be. A play is a play; it should not have a real human head in it. The actor should act, the audience should stay out of the play. At *Table Talk* 717c Plutarch recalls a remark of Timaeus about the coincidence that Euripides died on the same day the tyrant Dionysius I of Syracuse was born (or, more probably, became tyrant): "with Fate at the same time, as Timaeus says, bringing off the imitator of tragic sufferings and bringing on the one who enacted them." There too, the tragic language underlines the obscene blurring of the proper boundary between life and art.

Plutarch's use of tragedy in his *Lives* is thus very versatile and can contribute considerable subtlety to their texture. The exemplary nature of the tragic hero, and that of the Plutarchan hero, clearly suggested the network of images. Their development draws upon the full range of the implications of the complex relationship of theatrical mimesis to life. The reader stands in the position of spectator. The intratextual actors in Plutarch are historical figures, some of whom in their real political lives exploited the theater and its tropes for harshly practical ends; and some of whose lives in turn mirrored the rise and fall of the exemplary tragic hero. Tragic imagery can thus be used not only to illuminate the character of the hero and his situation, but also to explore the interrelation of life and art, and the pattern of historical events.

Plutarch's use of dramatic imagery is not unique (the novel also displays a subtle range of techniques of this type), but it is unusually varied and in terms of biographical texts is more sophisticated than anything in Roman biography. Plutarch's liking for dramatic imagery was noticed in the Renaissance and adopted by English readers of Plutarch, including writers of biography (see Mossman (2007) 89). So Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* (1595) recounts the Plutarchan anecdote (at *Pel.* 29.5 and *On the Fortune of Alexander* 334a–b) of Alexander of Pherae. Sidney also perhaps draws on the *Table Talk* passage above, in that he too casts a tyrant as a manufacturer of tragedies: "But how much it [tragedy] can moove, Plutarch yeeldeth a notable testimonie, of the abhominable Tyrant, Alexander Pheraus; from whose eyes, a Tragedy wel made, and represented, drewe aboundance of teares: who without all pitty, had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his owne blood. So as he, that was not ashamed to make matters for Tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a Tragedy." And, with irony particularly poignant in the light of his own fate, Thomas More used tragic imagery in both versions of his *History of King Richard III* to explain the crowd's meek response to Richard's hypocritical acceptance of the kingship after the death of Edward IV and the imprisonment of Edward V and his brother in the Tower: "And in a stage play all the people know right wel, that he that playeth the sowdayne (sultan) is percase a sowter (cobbler). Yet if one should can (know) so lyttle good, to shewe out of seasonne what acquaintance he hath with him, and calle him by his owne name whyle he standeth in his magestie, one of his tormentors might hap to breake his head, and worthy for marring of the play. And so they said that these matters bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scaffoldes. In which pore men be but ye lokers on. And they that wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step up and playe with them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play and do themselves no good." More's editor refers to Lucian's *Menippus* as a source for this passage (*Menippus* 16; Sylvester (1963) 258); but in its play on the importance of the dramatic illusion for tragedy and its use of dramatic imagery both to indicate Richard's duplicity and to illuminate the Laodicean attitude of the crowd, this passage is closer in spirit and accomplishment to Plutarch.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The classic treatment of the topic is De Lacy (1952), which focuses on *Demetrius* and to some extent *Antony*; Pelling (1988) then develops this theme in his commentary on *Antony* (see e.g. pp. 21–22). Mossman (1988) discusses *Alexander* in terms of epic and tragedy and develops the argument further in Mossman (1992), applying it to *Pyrrhus*. Braund (1993) discusses the use of tragedy at the end of the *Crassus*, while Zadorojnyi (1997) examines the juxtaposition of epic and tragedy in that *Life*. Both, in so doing, glance at its pair, the *Nicias*. Braund (1997) makes a more specific comparison between the *Pyrrhus* and Euripides' *Phoenician Women* than Mossman attempts to do. Papadi (2008) studies tragedy in the *Pompey* with particular emphasis on theatrical imagery. It is hoped that her PhD thesis will shortly be published as a book treating tragedy in Plutarch more generally. Theatrical vocabulary is also treated by Fuhrmann (1964); "big scenes" by Frazier (1992). Plutarch and Aristotle's *Poetics* is discussed by Sandbach (1982). Bartsch (1994) looks more generally at the disruption of the theatrical illusion in Latin texts from Nero to Hadrian. On theatrical imagery elsewhere in sixteenth-century English biography see Mossman (2007).

CHAPTER 30

The Philosopher-King

Bernard Boulet

1. Introduction

The philosopher-king is Plato's version of the good ruler, which is a theme as old as poetry. Homer narrates the story of the wise and wily king Odysseus who governs like a father. He is a good king mostly because he is "the peer of Zeus in counsel" (*Il.* 2.169): he can reflect and deliberate like no other character in Homer, both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, partly because no other mortal has ever seen or heard greater wonders than he, or suffered greater pains. His sharp intelligence, coupled with his courage, translates into dexterousness: he maneuvers out of most any situation and regains his place in his home and country. The "much-advised" Odysseus is a poetic prelude to the great figure of the philosopher-king that Plato presents a few centuries later in his *Republic*.

Plutarch is undoubtedly embellishing Roman history when he presents Numa, the Roman king (about 700 BCE), as the first philosopher-king. Both Numa and Lycurgus belong to an ancient history based on legends. This enables Plutarch to adorn their lives with a few ideal traits. Clearly, in the *Lives* of Lycurgus and Numa, Plutarch is transferring some of Plato's ideas to early history with the intention of lending them more weight (Schneeweiss (1979) 382). It was rather Plato, with the help of Socrates, who first developed the idea of the philosopher-king, stating it most forcefully: "Unless either philosophers become kings in our states or those whom we now call our kings and rulers take to the pursuit of philosophy seriously and adequately, and there is a conjunction of these two things, political power and philosophic intelligence [...], there can be no cessation of troubles [...] for our states, nor [...] for the human race either" (*Pl. Resp.* 473d, trans. Shorey). In Plato, the philosopher-king alone would bring happiness. Now to what extent did Plutarch follow Plato in favoring the rule of the philosopher-king? The question needs to be examined, because his Numa, as we shall see, is not a perfect

incarnation of Plato's philosopher-king. To be sure, Plutarch was a Platonist. But did he renew, in Imperial Rome, the demand that Plato made in democratic Athens? Did he demand that kings and emperors become philosophers?

This question sparks debate among prominent readers of Plutarch. On the one hand, Plutarch seems to follow in his master's footsteps. Plato crossed the seas to Sicily to train Dionysius as a philosopher-king, and Plutarch, close as he was to the emperor Trajan through his friend Sosius Senecio, dedicated to him his *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*.¹ Plato wrote in his *Republic* that philosophers, once freed from the Cave, should return to the darkness of the Cave to talk to the prisoners (*Resp.* 520c), and "there is every reason to think that Plutarch saw his political essays and especially his *Parallel Lives* as his attempt as philosopher to enter the cave of politics" (Stadter (2002a) 6).² On the other hand, Plutarch seems to distance himself from Plato's idealism in his famous criticism of the *Republic*: "Plato wrote a book on the One Ideal Constitution, but because of its forbidding character he could not persuade anyone to adopt it" (*On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* 328D–E, trans. Babbitt).³ Furthermore, the Roman Empire had achieved such a degree of good government by the end of the first century that, possibly, Plutarch's "concern is no longer with how philosophers shall become kings, or kings philosophers, but rather merely with how the philosopher shall properly consort with the kings and consuls of his day without any thought of supplanting them" (Dillon (2008) 351–352). Finally, because there is no mention of the philosopher-king in the *Lives*, only a demand for self-restraint (Van Raalte (2005) 81), one could simply conclude: "So much for the Philosopher-King" (Dillon (2006)). To shed light on this debate, let us start more generally with the relation between philosophy and politics.

2. The Conflict between Philosophy and Politics

To grasp the great achievement of bringing together, into one person, the two notions of "philosopher" and "king," one must first measure the full distance that naturally separates the two. Plutarch was mostly in agreement with Plato that reason and politics do not go easily hand in hand. The conflict between the two plays a role in the *Lives* of Dion and Brutus, where these two statesmen, both admirers of Plato, encounter great difficulties and mishaps in their attempt to reform their respective regimes. And many other *Lives* touch upon the same theme: *Alcibiades*, *Phocion*, *Cato the Younger*, *Alexander*, and *Aristides*, to name a few. The conflict between philosophy and politics is even more striking in Plato's *Apology of Socrates* where many Athenians become hostile to the "corrupting" influence of Socrates. In a more poetic style, the Allegory of the Cave of the *Republic* tells of the philosopher returning among his fellow-citizens only to be rejected and even killed because he no longer shares their views (517a). Philosophy and politics are not of one mind. Statesmen have no interest in knowing why oracles at Delphi are no longer given in verse, whether Epicurus actually makes a pleasant life impossible, whether there exists one world or five worlds, whether affections of the soul are worse than those of the body, whether the supreme god can create and destroy successive worlds, whether the number seven is of greater importance than the number five. Such philosophical questions discussed in Plutarch's essays will never be the subject of discussion in political circles. Plutarch and Plato are aware that the philosopher will naturally be more inclined

to keep to his circle of friends. After his unsuccessful visits to Sicily, where he failed to influence the tyrants, Plato retired to his Academy. And Plutarch preferred to remain a resident of his quiet village of Chaeronea, even though he was well connected in Rome. There is something in the heart and mind of the philosopher, stemming from the love of learning, that keeps him at a distance from the sparring and the scuffle of political life (*Resp.* 521b). As for the political ruler, he finds the high-minded principles of philosophy too lofty for the forum. Moreover, Roman emperors would surely have been offended, and become suspicious, if a philosopher had suggested too directly that he knew better how to rule. In most cases, there appears to be no love lost between ruler and philosopher. If the two do meet and work together, their marriage, more often than not, is not born of love but of utility. This is what Plato meant when he said that philosophers did not wish to rule (*Resp.* 519c).

A special convergence between philosophy and politics is at the heart of the *Life of Numa*. If a philosopher is forced to become king, in what manner will he rule? Plutarch's answer is that he will rule like king Numa. Legend has it that Numa received a Pythagorean education, and Plutarch is all too happy to uphold this legend in order to dress his Numa in philosopher's clothes. For the benefit of his countrymen, however, Numa points rather to his Muse Egeria as the source of his education, and this will be his lifelong ruse: he pretends that his wisdom comes from a divine source. Until the age of forty, before entering political life, he spends much of his time in the woods, supposedly conversing with the nymph, deliberately avoiding Rome and political life. But his life of leisure with the nymph, which represents the "erotic" life of the soul, is encroached upon when the Romans and the Sabines have difficulty choosing a common ruler. They finally agree to call upon Numa to become their king. At first, he refuses. When finally his father urges him to do the honorable thing, he consents, asking the gods to confirm his nomination. And so this philosopher is crowned king, allegedly fulfilling Plato's ideal before the letter: "the power of a king should be united in one person with the insight of a philosopher" (*Num.* 20.7).⁴

But what did Numa actually do as ruler? His reign is most surprising, for he neglected important aspects of good government assigned to the philosopher-king in the *Republic*: Numa rejected military training and let cupidity run free; he neglected to teach courage and moderation to his citizens. Indeed, there is no mention of military exercises in the *Life of Numa* and the army never goes out into battle during his forty-three-year reign. The soldiers undoubtedly occupied themselves with their farms or trade, and there was no public education of the young: "Numa left the upbringing of youths to the wishes or necessities of the fathers" (*Comp. Lyc.-Num.* 4.2). He was content, through many religious rites borrowed from Pythagoras, to teach them "to honour justice and hate violence and war" (*Num.* 5.5). Through taming their violent spirit, he fostered pleasure-loving citizens. His subjects enjoyed a sweet life, in greater harmony with the "erotic" life of the philosopher, and did not rebel against his rule.

While maintaining a peaceful state, Numa turned his attention to organizing a spiritual or intellectual life for himself and his philosopher-priests: "[In the royal house] he spent most of his time performing sacred functions, or teaching the priests, or engaging in the quiet contemplation of divine things" (*Num.* 14.1). These conversations focused on philosophical studies: he wrote twenty-four books, not on legislation but on religion and philosophy, and secretly instructed his priests in both (*Num.* 22). He built a temple in

the image of the cosmos, with the eternal flame in the center; he taught his priests how to use secret instruments (geometrical instruments) to rekindle the eternal flame from the rays of the sun; he noted the revolutions of the stars and the difference between the lunar year and the solar year. These are not the usual concerns of statesmen. But they are in keeping with the higher education proposed by Plato, which calls for the study of geometry, astronomy, and philosophy. Numa's circle of philosopher-priests, as imagined by Plutarch, is a reflection of the class of philosophers in the *Republic*, and both these texts claim a special place for philosophers. As we see, Numa was more a philosopher than a ruler: he spent more time on the philosophical aspects of Plato's Beautiful City than on its daily political requirements. Plutarch, while in agreement with Plato's idea of the philosopher-king, shows more vividly the philosopher's reluctance to rule as king.⁵ Numa had warned that he would govern with a view to peace and not war, but his rule became relaxed beyond the limits of prudence. He lived, however, the peaceful life favored by the philosopher, and his reign was agreeable to all while it lasted. Numa was enamored of Lady Wisdom and, like any lover, was prone to forget his duties toward family and country. It is rather Lycurgus who is the selfless legislator, devoting himself to the good of the community to the point of self-imposed exile and, supposedly, even death. Unlike Lycurgus, king Numa did not make the greatest sacrifice: for better or for worse, he refused to establish the most beautiful regime, as outlined in the *Republic*. He established a regime in his own likeness, preferring the philosophic life to the common good. In theory, an uncompromising philosopher like Numa might appear to be the best ruler, but in practice, this is not the case.

The *Life of Dion* also illustrates the difficulty of applying philosophy to politics. As soon as he met Plato, Dion became most passionate about philosophy. He thought it would be easy to communicate his love of philosophy to the tyrant of Syracuse, his brother-in-law Dionysius I. It proved to be completely impossible. But this setback did not deter him. When Dionysius the Younger, son of Dionysius I, later became ruler, Dion undertook to steer him in turn away from tyranny and shape him into a philosopher-king, or at least into a moderate ruler. Again he failed miserably. Plutarch suggests that Dion was a bit naïve and too austere (*Dion* 4.3 and 8.2): philosophy does not set fire to men's souls as easily as he thought, especially in the case of men in power. Of Dion and Brutus, Plutarch declares with some ambiguity: "they bore witness to the doctrine of their teacher in virtue, that wisdom and justice must be united with power and good fortune if public careers are to take on beauty as well as grandeur" (*Dion* 1.2). They were undoubtedly of noble spirit, but did not grasp how to bridge the distance between the ideal world of the *Republic* and the real world of Syracuse or Rome. They did not understand the difficult relation between philosophy and politics. To be somewhat flippant, we might call them "philosopher-kings adrift in a hostile world" (Dillon (2008) 351). Like Thales falling into the well, naïve philosophy will appear clumsy when dealing with the hostile world of politics.

Two Renaissance writers, both great readers of Plato and Plutarch, gave their rendition of the same philosophic clumsiness. In Thomas More's *Utopia*, Raphael Hythloday is quite the high-minded philosopher, having given away all his possessions to travel the world, not caring in what country he would one day be laid to rest. After discovering the wonderful city of Utopia, he visits the English court and begins to criticize freely the laws of England. Some courtiers, impressed by his intrepid remarks, suggest that he

would make the perfect counselor to the king. But he is like a mind without a body. Because he has no country, and therefore no affection for any fellow-countrymen, his carefree philosophy leads him to suggest outlandish reforms. Can a man without love of country give sound political advice? Through Hythloday and his encounter with the English court, More warns us how ridiculous the naïve philosopher can become on the political scene. As for Shakespeare, his Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan in *The Tempest*, is stranded on an island with his daughter Miranda. While still in Milan, he had shunned politics, preferring to spend all his time in his library, rapt in study, entrusting his brother Antonio with all the affairs of the state. Antonio, of course, takes control of the city and banishes Prospero. The play shows how he learns from this misfortune, becomes a poetic image of the philosopher-king, and regains his throne. These are lessons for philosophers.

Philosophy and politics, as we have seen, stand at a certain distance from each other. Some might like to conclude that “never the twain shall meet,” but this extreme position is not that of Plato and Plutarch. They bring to our attention the conflict between the one and the other only to encourage a more appropriate alliance between the two. Socrates did not become the first public philosopher only to declare that philosophy had nothing to say or accomplish in public. If he avoided direct political involvement whenever possible, it was to discuss political questions more freely (*Apology of Socrates* 32a). Even if Socrates preferred, according to the metaphor, to stay out of the rain rather than to go admonish the frantic crowd in the storm, only to get wet (*Resp.* 496c–d), neither he nor Plato ever abandoned political philosophy. Every Platonic dialogue is set in a political context, suggesting that philosophical discussion is always in relation to politics. His Socrates is comparable to the prisoner freed from the Cave who returns to the Cave to engage in discussions with his fellow-countrymen. The alliance between philosophy and politics is also extensively discussed in Plutarch’s *Lives* and in his political essays. He defends the idea of the philosopher-king in no uncertain terms in his *Life of Numa*, declaring king Numa to be “an illustration and confirmation of Plato’s opinion” (*Num.* 20.6–7). He bestows the same honor upon Cicero who “bore witness to the truth of Plato’s prophecy that states would then have respite from evil, when in one and the same person, by some happy fortune, great power and wisdom should be conjoined with justice” (*Comp. Dem.-Cic.* 3.4). Plutarch’s clear statements in favor of the philosopher-king, his unceasing love of both philosophy and politics, make us press on in search of a better understanding of his position.

3. Politics: A Twofold Teaching

Plutarch offers a twofold teaching on the good ruler, for the simple reason that the ruler might or might not be well disposed to learning. Plutarch did not invent this twofold teaching: he found it in Plato and made slight adjustments to fit the needs of the Roman Empire.

In the *Republic*, the first level of teaching is given to the guardians; the second level is reserved for the class of philosophers. “The first stage aims at shaping of emotions and desires by instilling correct beliefs and producing pre-dialectical virtues. The product of this stage are the Guardians [who] possess only a pre-reflective notion of virtue [...]

During the second stage of education some Guardians also become Philosophers. The result of the second educational stage is virtue based on fully-developed rational knowledge” (Zadorojnyi (2002) 301). The reason for this two-stage education is that the philosopher-king must be wise in a way that the guardians, or good citizens, cannot be. Most citizens will never attain philosophical knowledge. They will become good citizens through moral upbringing and patriotic deeds, not through knowledge of justice. Like guard dogs, the guardians must have no doubts as to how they are to act. Unlike the philosopher-king, they must not discuss the laws and examine to what extent they mirror or do not mirror the nature of Justice. To refer to the Allegory of the Cave, the guardians must defend the world of the shadows (the political cave), whereas the philosopher-king must distinguish between mere shadows and the truth (the natural world outside). It must suffice to instill in the guardians pre-reflective virtues, which amount to right opinion, not knowledge (Pl. *Meno* 96d–100b).

The two stages of education found in Plato are repeated in Plutarch’s *Lives* of Lycurgus and Numa, but separately, the first stage appearing only in *Lycurgus*, the second only in *Numa*. Lycurgus was a wise man who traveled widely to compare regimes and laws. He refused to be king, was not really a philosopher, but was indeed a skillful legislator who knew the principles of a stable and harmonious regime. He took no steps to open a school of philosophy, but turned the whole city into a military camp that taught courage, frugality, communal life, and obedience to the laws through exercise rather than theoretical study. Sparta was “an entire city given to the love of wisdom” (*Lyc.* 31.2), but this wisdom was purely moral, or political, or practical: to be Spartan was to philosophize, not in word but in deed (20.6). There is no twofold teaching here, only the pre-reflective stage pushed to the extreme, so much so that all forms of truly dialectical education are banned. In contrast, the rational education of the priests in Numa’s Rome is so time-consuming that he neglects the pre-reflective education of the guardians and workers. Taken as a whole, the *Lives* of Lycurgus and Numa present us with the problem of combining the wisest man (Numa) with the perfect city (Sparta), of combining the rational education favored by the former with the pre-reflective education needed in the latter. As such, the two *Lives* are a reading guide to the *Republic* and the *Laws*.⁶ And to the extent that Plutarch is also writing for his times, the *Lives* of Lycurgus and Numa present the problem of infusing Roman politics with Greek philosophy.

More generally, Plutarch’s *Lives* offer countless lessons for rulers and philosophers alike. Some *Lives* even show incidents where the two meet: Pericles was a friend and student of Anaxagoras; Alcibiades was a student of Socrates; Dion was a student of Plato; Alexander was the student of Aristotle and, when in Asia, had the philosophers Callisthenes and Anaxarchus with him. Many other *Lives* offer various lessons illustrating the alliance between wisdom and political action. For example, the *Life of Phocion* contains a lesson for philosophers: Phocion was a virtuous and wise man, but held too blindly to Socrates’ moral principle that it is better to receive wrong than to do wrong. He refused to hand over to the authorities an enemy of the state because he had given his word for his safe passage into Athens. Plutarch condemns Phocion’s lack of political judgment: “So far as he spoke for himself alone, the answer was honourable and high-minded enough, but he who hazards his country’s safety, and that, too, when he is her magistrate and chief commander, can scarcely be acquitted, I fear, of transgressing a higher and more sacred obligation of justice, which he owed to his fellow-citizens”

(*Phoc.* 32). The *Life of Nicias*, on the other hand, offers a lesson to statesmen: Nicias was not a student of philosophy, and so was prone to superstition, and this caused his downfall. When in Sicily, upon an eclipse of the moon, he postponed his army's retreat from Syracuse, waiting for another full cycle of the moon; this caused not only his ruin and shame, but also the greatest loss of Athenian troops in the whole of the Peloponnesian War. These lessons and many more are the very stuff of the *Lives*.

Plutarch's twofold teaching also appears in two of his political essays: *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power* and *To An Uneducated Ruler*. These two essays are complementary, as Giuseppe Zecchini points out (Zecchini (2002)), and must be viewed as opposite only in their approach: the first is addressed to the philosopher, the second to the ruler; the first invites philosophers to turn toward political leaders, the second exhorts political leaders to turn toward philosophy. The two essays differ in the kind of education they propose.

In the first essay, *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power*, Plutarch urges philosophers to become acquainted with rulers who are not "wild and savage" (776C) or entirely immoderate (778A), in order to guide them to moderation (778F) and other political virtues that become, in a ruler, the fountain of happiness for all. The philosopher should teach the ruler, not the arcane principles of logic (777B) or the higher parts of philosophy, but the most basic political virtues (776E). "The *Maxime cum principibus* is an exhortation, for the philosopher, far from being indifferent to politics, conceives it as his prime duty to speak to the mighty in order to steer them to virtue" (Zecchini (2002) 192). This is the practical side of the life of the philosopher, to which Plutarch paid much attention. The philosopher must become a teacher of moral and political virtue, *arete* (776C). He must come forth from his school or study to converse with men in power, as did even the reluctant Panaetius when sent for by Scipio (777A). But to succeed in this, he must start with a major point: in order to bridge the gap between philosophy and politics, he must begin by achieving, in his own mind, the marriage between the ideal and the possible. And this is the crucial lesson the essay teaches. In the company of men in power, the words of the philosopher must not resemble "statues doomed to stand idly on their pedestals and no more" (776C). A high-minded philosopher, as More suggests, must learn to use a "mixed or oblique approach" (*Utopia*, Book I). The finest debates in philosophy remain too contemplative, and philosophy must here strive "to make everything that it touches active and efficient and alive," teaching judgments that are "useful" (776C). Only then can the philosopher give reasonable guidance for the practice of political virtues: good counsel (*euboulia*), justice (*dikaiosune*), goodness (*chrestotes*), and greatness of mind (*megalophrosune*). This set of virtues (Zecchini (2002) 193), except for the last one, is repeated in *To An Uneducated Ruler*: good laws (*eunomia*), right (*dike*), mildness (*praotes*), truth (*aletheia*). The shift in the fourth virtue, from "greatness of mind" to "truth," reflects a shift from politics to philosophy. The first essay deals with rulers who possess an unflinching desire for greatness and will only admire truth when presented in the guise of "greatness of mind": this is pre-reflective education. The second essay directly addresses the ruler who possesses a more philosophical soul and might become a student of contemplative truth: this is rational education.

Indeed, the complementary essay *To An Uneducated Ruler* points to the philosophical, or rational, aspect of education: "The *Ad principem ineruditum* is an exhortation in

reverse, for kings and magistrates [...] realize that, if they remain ignorant, they cannot teach others, and thus that they must train their own minds in philosophy” (Zecchini (2002) 192). This essay, to some extent, points to the possibility of the philosopher-king. From the very first paragraph, it begins an ascent toward higher learning, and philosophical expressions abound: reason itself – not only right opinion – must govern the one who governs (779D); statesmen crumble like clay from lack of *paideia* and by the ignorance within them (780A); reason, the master of all masters, is to be found in philosophy and must constantly dwell in the soul of the ruler (*empsuchos logos*, 780C), such that the sovereign will be an image of god (780E) and in the likeness of god (780E) who orders all things; for he will carry within himself divine reason (780F). The virtue (*arete*, 781A) of the ruler is now a product of divine intelligence and understanding. But “he can only reach this lofty ideal through philosophy” (Roskam (2002) 180). In this essay, philosopher and ruler seem destined to meet in one person. Nevertheless, the essay never examines the precise philosophical learning that is needed to become a good ruler, and it never uses the expression “philosopher-king.” The well-disposed reader of the essay will be thoroughly persuaded that knowledge makes good rulers and ignorance makes bad rulers (780A), but he will discover very little that might warn him about the tension that naturally arises between ruling and philosophizing, between the political *logos* and the divine *logos*. The essay alludes only once to this tension when it tells how Diogenes shrugged off Alexander. But Plutarch quickly smooths over any rift between the two by declaring boldly that philosophy would have permitted Alexander to become Diogenes without ceasing to be Alexander. Better still, the more one is Alexander, the more one must become Diogenes, because the greater the storm, the more one needs to have good ballast and a good pilot. By using metaphors and analogies throughout, this essay skims over the complex problems of joining philosophy and politics, and, as such, remains an exhortation rather than a rigorous analysis. While Plutarch appears to be philosophizing, he is not truly doing so: his style is more pedagogical than philosophical.

From our reading of these two political essays, a well-disposed ruler, in the best-case scenario, will learn to become a philosopher-king, but this requires an uncommon alliance of philosophy and politics. Most rulers can only attain some form of moderation, and to this end a philosopher should be persuaded to converse with him.

We must mention a third political essay, *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, which stands as a special case. It presents a philosopher who is king. The tone of the text is truly startling: Plutarch greatly overstates the virtues of Alexander and completely omits his shortcomings. His essay “is a rather ingenuous, simplistic and enthusiastic exaltation of Alexander as a philosopher-king” (Zecchini (2002) 195). The irony of this exaltation is all the more striking, and puzzling, when we compare this glorification of Alexander with Plutarch’s more sober portrait of him in the *Lives*. In the essay, Alexander is called a philosopher over a dozen times, but never once in the *Life of Alexander*, where he does keep company with philosophers, but is no true philosopher himself. Truth be told, the historical Alexander was inspired by Greek wisdom, but did not truly possess it, for there was some madness in his endless quest: the more he pushed eastward, the more he was prone to bouts of despair, anger, and superstition. As a student of Aristotle, he had gained some understanding of philosophy, but did not measure up to the philosopher-king. Of course, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle make poor heroes in the eyes of Roman leaders, and so Plutarch, in flamboyant rhetoric, prefers to hail Alexander as the most glorious

philosopher and teacher of all. He even makes light of the *Republic* and the *Laws*: Plato could not persuade anyone to adopt his ideal regime and hardly anyone reads his *Laws*! But hundreds of thousands have made use of Alexander's laws (328D–E)! Of course, Plutarch knows very well that if Alexander can be credited with bringing Greek civilization to Asia, it was none other than Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, not to mention Homer and other Greek poets, who defined it and inspired the great conqueror. While Alexander marches deep into Persia, all the way to India, he carries Homer's *Iliad*, which he cherishes. And he looks toward Athens, the city of poets and philosophers that will tell his story: "O Athenians, can you possibly believe what perils I am undergoing to win glory in your eyes?" (*Alex.* 60.6). A few centuries later, Plutarch, an Athenian by education, turns Alexander into the shining star of Greek thought in the Roman world. Alexander becomes the new hero for imperial times: in him, Roman emperors will find a philosopher-king to their liking.

Plutarch, clearly, exhorts rulers to become philosopher-kings, but the principle cannot be applied blindly (Roskam (2009) 68). He is undoubtedly aware that his exhortations will not turn most rulers toward philosophy, or even most philosophers toward politics. However, Plutarch's essays also serve another purpose, more philosophical than political: to open young minds to philosophy itself. When applied as an "internal speech" (or an exhortation to oneself), these same essays yield good results. Let us lastly examine their purely philosophical interpretation.

4. Philosophy: The Internal Speech

Plutarch's argument for the philosopher-king is meant to be applied not only to politics, but also, analogously and more naturally, to man himself. Man, being a community of passions and faculties, must find a way to elect reason as the ruler of his whole person. This private application is what Plutarch calls the internal speech of philosophy, as opposed to the external or public speech of the philosopher who counsels the ruler.⁷

To examine this internal speech of philosophy, and understand the play between the internal and external speeches, we must first say a word about "indirection." Like all his contemporaries, Plutarch could not criticize directly the ignorance or injustice of a Roman emperor. *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander* points to Alexander, but it is really aiming at Roman leaders and emperors. Plutarch knew how to be indirect, or ironical, or discreet under imperial rule. He could not propose openly that the philosopher-king has a natural right to rule. Imperial Rome rebuked its intellectuals more promptly than democratic Athens, and Socrates would have been condemned sooner under Domitian, who at one point banished the philosophers from Rome. As for Trajan, who was favorable to philosophers and learned men, he was still the emperor and could not tolerate direct criticism. As Stadter points out, writers had to be indirect: "If Pliny found it impossible to speak to the emperor about his conduct except in terms of adulation, Plutarch, even as a philosopher, would find it useful to be circumspect. Dio Chrysostom, in his orations on kingship, chose to speak abstractly, and go back to the examples of Homer and the Zeus of Phidias. The self-censorship required by an absolute monarchy, even one not a dictatorship, required indirection" (Stadter (2002b) 230). We have another example of this indirection in *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, where Plutarch

evokes past rulers and their memorable sayings, with the intention of influencing Trajan, to whom he dedicates his essay. Here again, external speech is not a direct copy but a rhetorical or political or pedagogical adaption of the inner speech.

Two questions in *Table Talks* will illustrate more vividly Plutarch's indirection, and the difference between internal and external speech. The very first question asks, "whether one should indulge in philosophical talk while drinking" (612F, trans. Clement and Hoffleit). The answer is twofold: if most of the attendees are learned men, then one may philosophize freely, but if a number of them are not, one must be tactful, that is to say, "one should talk philosophy without seeming to do so," and serious debates must take on an air of light-heartedness (613F). But what is true of drinking parties (or dinner parties) is also true of all conversation in public: the philosopher should discuss serious questions with political figures, but in a light fashion. The drinking party, in *Table Talks*, becomes an analogy for public meetings in general. Using indirection, Plutarch is teaching how to philosophize in public.

Question VIII 3 starts with a dramatic incident: Ammonius, the philosopher, was throwing a dinner party at his house in Athens when a crowd suddenly started shouting outside, asking to see Ammonius, who was serving a third term as magistrate. After sending the people away, the people inside "discussed the question why those inside hear clearly people shouting outside, while persons outside do not hear those inside so well." Ammonius, quoting Aristotle, offers a very brief scientific answer and then changes the subject slightly. But the initial question and the incident that sparked it – which occupies only fifteen lines – offer a most interesting analogy. Hearing is an analogy for understanding, and Plutarch is philosophizing without seeming to do so. The crowd outside represents the uneducated who shout but cannot hear or understand the people inside; those inside, the educated who discuss philosophy, can hear and understand both themselves and the rabble outside. The crowd outside is not interested in discussing the difference between what one can hear inside or outside, and so Ammonius addresses them as a magistrate should, but to his guests inside, he speaks as a philosopher. The free discussions of philosophers must stay confined within their banquet halls, because the public would misunderstand and misquote them.⁸ Unlike Ammonius, Dion did not see the difference between inside and outside. He thought that "rational philosophy," which lit his soul on fire, "would have a like persuasive force with Dionysius" (*Dion* 4.3). Dillon rightly comments: "Plutarch does [...] let slip [...] a significant aspect of [Dion's] character which was to lead ultimately to his death: his single-minded conviction that rationality – or at least what he conceived of at any given time to be rational – should prevail in all minds to which it was presented" (Dillon (2008) 355–356).

The distinction between "inside" and "outside" helps us to understand the private character of the internal speech. Plutarch met prominent political figures at drinking parties, notably his friend Sosius Senecio, who was close to the emperor Trajan. But he also wrote extensively, dedicating his *Lives* and a few essays to this very friend, and dedicating a few other essays to various Romans. Now because books are even more open to the public than drinking parties, the guidelines in *Table Talks* should also apply to writing books. A book is an invitation to read extended to anyone and everyone, and so it is like a mixed drinking party, and therefore one must learn, as a writer, to philosophize at times while not appearing to do so, that is to say, to speak to the people inside while appearing to address the people outside. In *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with*

Men in Power, Plutarch declares with some irony that it is common knowledge that there are two kinds of speech, the internal or philosophical speech, and the external or public speech (777C). And he specifies the important relation between the two: the external speech is the messenger of the internal speech. Plutarch is warning the philosopher not to make the same mistake as Dion: the philosopher must learn to translate his rational ideas into sound political advice capable of bearing fruit by achieving some form of political harmony and friendship. Analogously, the same is true of the internal speech: “it makes a man harmonious with himself [...] ‘Faction is not, nor is ill-starred strife, to be found in his members,’ there is no passion disobedient to reason, no strife of impulse with impulse, no opposition of argument to argument, there is no rough tumult and pleasure on the border-line, as it were, between desire and repentance” (777C, trans. Fowler). The vocabulary is political (“faction,” “strife,” “tumult,” “border-line”), but the speech is meant for internal application! To pursue the metaphor, the internal speech establishes *good government* within the soul itself. This essay can therefore be read in two ways. Taken literally, it is the public message of philosophy and is directed “outside.” Interpreted as an analogy, the essay is reserved for “inside” meditation, exhorting the reader to achieve rational harmony within himself. Consequently, some of Plutarch’s political writings can also be read as philosophical speeches for private use. Any well-disposed uneducated reader, even if he is not a ruler, will read *To An Uneducated Ruler* and feel the bite of Plutarch’s reprimand. The whole essay can thus become a private exhortation: the reader will endeavor to produce harmony within his soul by making reason the master of his own person. The uneducated ruler and his kingdom become an analogy for the uneducated man and his soul. This internal, or “psychological,” interpretation is the philosophical teaching of the essay. It teaches one to become a philosopher-king of one’s own private kingdom.

The same analogy is found in the *Republic*: Socrates develops an analogy between the city and man, and more precisely between the three classes of citizens and man’s tripartite soul. The working class corresponds to the desiring part of man, the class of guardians corresponds to the courageous part of the soul, and the philosopher-king is comparable to the rational part that must be king of the soul and produce harmony and justice within man. This is the truly philosophical teaching behind the argument for the philosopher-king, because the *Republic* is first and foremost a book on education. “The emphasis laid on education in both the *Republic* and the *Laws* invited them to be read as ideal educational programmes, rather than blueprints of reform. The focus could be readily shifted from politics to psychology [...]: there is a *politeia* within every one of us” (Zadorojnyi (2002) 301). Jean-Jacques Rousseau made the same bold assessment when he wrote that the *Republic* is a book on education, not politics (*Emile*, Book I). But let us admit that Plato’s intentions were political as well as philosophical, for the *Republic* does in fact teach political virtues. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that, in the eyes of Plato and Plutarch, the internal speech, giving birth to the philosopher-king in one’s soul, is more important, or at least more successful, than the external speech. As a blueprint for reform, the Beautiful City of the *Republic* can rarely be applied as such in politics, but when viewed as an analogy, it can readily produce happy results in men’s souls. The *Republic* and the notion of the philosopher-king have taught many readers of Plato how to achieve the best *politeia* within themselves. This was certainly the case for Plutarch himself.

5. Conclusion

Plutarch shares the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-king: the ruler can become, on rare occasions, a student of the inner speech of reason and philosophy. Alternatively, one would hope that he would at least pay attention to the external speech of a philosopher friend. The complex relation between the internal and the external speech explains the complexity of Plutarch's position. It also explains the reason for the twofold teaching in his political essays and in Plato's *Republic*. It most importantly convinces us that, when advocating the idea of the philosopher-king, Plutarch is not simply offering a theory devoid of practical application, either political or philosophical.

As to the political, the wise are seldom rulers themselves nor do they often prevail against the powerful. But the ideal ruler, or the philosopher-king, does remain a standard by which to judge rulers actually in power. Plutarch holds up the ideal for everyone to see, declaring that the ruler should be a philosopher. But then he proposes realistic measures that fit most circumstances: a philosopher should counsel rulers and rulers should listen to good counsel. If Plato lends more weight to the ideal, whereas Plutarch discusses at greater length the pragmatic solution, it may be because they lived in different regimes and in different times. In Imperial Rome, even under Trajan, Plutarch could not directly insist on the rule of the philosopher-king as Plato had done in Athens. Plutarch mostly encouraged rulers to practice moderation and justice, according to good laws. A century later, Marcus Aurelius became emperor, bearing witness that some form of philosopher-king is possible, while extremely rare. But the idea of the philosopher-king will bear greater fruit as an internal speech, or a *politeia* within the soul, as it did for Plutarch himself, because it can, in this way, transform more effectively the lives of a greater number of us.

NOTES

- 1 Mark Beck ((2002) 163–173) makes a convincing argument that these *Sayings*, and their Dedicatory Letter, were indeed addressed to Trajan.
- 2 Geert Roskam is of the opinion that Plutarch shares Plato's theory of a philosopher-king at least as a political ideal (Roskam (2002) 175). See also Wardman (1974) 50 and Squilloni (1989) 225–243.
- 3 On Plutarch's criticism: "Plutarch found Plato's ideal state too strict and uncompromising" (de Blois and Bons (1992) 165). And: "No doubt Plutarch realized that [the *Republic*] (and the *Laws*) could not serve as guides for the political life of his own times" (Hershbell (1995) 213).
- 4 Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* are always quoted in the Perrin translation.
- 5 In Plato, the philosopher-king seems more obliging, because he is told that he is the child of the City, not of Nature, and that he must pay his debt to the City by becoming its ruler, and the argument seems to work. Yet Socrates will admit that this success might be only a dream, owing to the very reluctance of the philosophers to rule as kings (*Resp.* 519c).
- 6 While the *Republic* focuses on the second stage of education, the *Laws* gives more attention to the first stage: the three legislators set down the main laws and speeches needed to maintain good citizens. The *Laws* praises Lycurgus who, instead of producing an all-powerful philosopher-king,

diminishes the power of the Spartan kings and establishes a moderate, or mixed, regime. This is the rule of law rather than the rule of man proposed in the *Republic*. This lowering of expectations is even reflected in the expressions used in both dialogues to propose a union of power and intelligence: the *Republic* proposes a conjunction between political power and philosophic intelligence, whereas the *Laws* demands only a conjunction of practical wisdom (*phronēin*) and temperance (*sōphronein*) (*Leg.* 711e).

- 7 Geert Roskam presents a good detailed analysis of the two *logoi* (Roskam (2009) 96).
- 8 Plato offers the same warning in his *Seventh Letter* (344c–d).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

On the notion of the philosopher-king in Plutarch, one should first read the *Lives* of Lycurgus and Numa, and the three political essays *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power*, *To An Uneducated Ruler*, and *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*.

For a debate on Plutarch's hope for a coalition between philosopher and ruler, compare Roskam (2002) 175–189 and Dillon (2008) 351–364.

For a further analysis of Numa as the philosopher-king, see Boulet (2005) 245–256. Plutarch illustrates the basic difficulties in achieving harmony in the city: his Numa, the ideal king, does not implement the political aspects of Lycurgus' ideal regime (*Lycurgus*), or of Plato's ideal city (*Republic*).

Giuseppe Zecchini offers a good comparative analysis of the two political essays crucial to the topic of the philosopher-king: *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power* and *To An Uneducated Ruler*. He also explains how Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom elevated Alexander to the rank of the good ruler, or the ruler admiring philosophy, or even the philosopher-king (with a quick reference to *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*).

Geert Roskam (2009) offers a valuable interpretation with commentary of Plutarch's *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power*. He shows that it forms “a kind of diptych” with *To An Uneducated Ruler*. He also sheds light on Plutarch's pedagogical intention, on his fluctuation between a rigid and a pragmatic position regarding the philosopher-king, and on his distinction between two kinds of speech (*logoi*).

Alexei Zadorojnyi (2002) understands Plato's *Republic* and how Plutarch follows Plato's lead. He explains how the notion of the philosopher-king belongs to the realm of education rather than politics: the comparison between the city and man is for the benefit of the individual man. The parts of the soul, like the parts of the ideal city, must achieve harmony through the rule of reason, the real philosopher-king in the soul.

Plato offers a further discussion on the relation between philosophy and politics in his *Statesman*.

For various aspects touching upon the relation between philosopher and ruler in Plutarch, see the many good articles in Stadter and Van der Stockt (2002).

CHAPTER 31

The Socratic Paradigm

Mark Beck

1. Introduction: Socrates as the Paradigm

In the year 399 BCE the Athenian Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, met his end. His execution followed his conviction for impiety (*asebeia*) and corrupting the youth in a public trial. In reality, as his friend and brightest pupil Plato makes clear, Socrates' entire way of life was on trial. That way of life and the courage he displayed in the face of those who sought to rein him in rendered him one of the most inspirational individuals in the ancient world. While Aristophanes offers us in the *Clouds* our first satirical glimpse of Socrates as the head of the "Thinkery" (*Phrontisterion*), we turn to the works of Plato and Xenophon for the most vivid and credible portrait of the man and his ideas. For Plutarch, steeped in the ideals of the Academy and Peripatos, Plato brings to life in the portrait of Socrates an exemplary figure, ethical and even-tempered, courageous on the battlefield and in civic affairs, obedient to the laws of the *polis* to the end, in short, a wholly positive portrait. Historically Socrates' association with Alcibiades, perhaps the most ambiguous figure in Athenian politics at that time, and Critias, Plato's uncle and the leader of the short-lived and widely reviled oligarchic and Spartan-style rule of the Thirty, is the source of the charge that he corrupted the youth (Waterfield (2009) 123–125). The reign of terror instituted by the Thirty left those associated with this unpopular interim government liable to reprisals and Socrates therefore was guilty by association. Socrates, according to Plato's presentation of his defense speeches in the *Apology*, displays an awareness of this. In both realms, as the *Apology* and the *Symposium* make clear, he displayed courage and fortitude. By virtue of Plato's representation of Socrates, the Athenian came to symbolize the debate about the relationship between philosophy and politics.

The exploration of this relationship is one of Plutarch's fundamental aims in the *Parallel Lives* and so Socrates emerges in several key *Lives* as the premier paradigmatic figure who may be approximated but never equaled (for an account of Socrates in the *Moralia* and in the *Alcibiades* see Pelling (2005)). This chapter seeks to understand the precise nature of the Socratic paradigm in the *Lives* in answering a series of questions: Where and under what circumstances does it surface? How and why is it used? What is Plutarch's intention in employing it? And finally, what is the overarching significance of the Socratic paradigm in the *Lives* with regard to Plutarch's political and philosophic message?

In Plutarch's estimation Socrates not only brought philosophy into the political sphere, he also showed the way with his own example, and moreover he was "the first to demonstrate that life at all times and in all endeavors, in all experiences, and activities admits philosophy" (*An seni* 796D–F). In addition to the usual tasks statesmanship imposes, such as holding office, serving as an ambassador, addressing the assembly, proposing laws, and making motions, Plutarch thinks that being a statesman is like being a philosopher (*An seni* 796C–D). This insight was Socrates' great contribution. The central statement of this idea of the fundamental utility of philosophy in managing civic affairs is found in Plato's *Republic* and is encapsulated in the highly influential conception presented there of the philosopher-king (see especially Reeve (1988) and Schofield (1999)). Plutarch takes up this concept most fully in the *Life of Numa*, a monarch whom he portrays as approaching, if not attaining, this ideal (see Boulet). Numa, equipped with training in Pythagorean philosophy, succeeds in curbing the excesses of Romulan Rome (Banta (2006), (2007a), (2007b)). The ruler or statesman can leave his impress on the people for better or worse.

2. Socrates and the Failure of Alcibiades

In seeking to exonerate Socrates, Plato strives to portray just what went wrong. Why did Alcibiades not fulfill his potential and become a responsible statesman in the Socratic sense? Plutarch takes up this issue in the *Alcibiades*, but does not exactly dwell on it. In fact he seems intent on dealing with it swiftly and dropping it early from the discussion, since he only expends three chapters on it (*Alc.* 4–6).¹ Plutarch employs a series of contrasts to characterize Alcibiades and his relationship with Socrates (see Verdegem (2010) 131). Socrates is contrasted with Alcibiades' other lovers who are attracted physically to Alcibiades, while Socrates is portrayed as being more interested in the young man's intellectual potential and capacity for virtue (*Alc.* 4.1). The theme of Alcibiades succumbing to the advances and flattery of his other admirers and eventually turning away from Socrates in his pursuit of power and glory intertextually reflects Plato's views on Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates, as represented in the *Symposium* and the *Alcibiades I* (on this intertextual relationship see Gribble (1999) 271–272; Duff (1999a) 224–227, (2009) 37–50, and (2011) 28; Pelling (2005) 116–125; Verdegem (2010) 137). Despite his great natural ability (*Alc.* 4.1; *euphuías*), Alcibiades does not fully succumb to Socrates' instruction and example, and not surprisingly "education is a central theme in *Coriolanus–Alcibiades*" (Pelling (2005) 116). Plutarch's depiction of this failure mirrors Plato's account of the failure of philosophic natures to achieve their

potential, a degenerative process described as corruption (*diaphthora*) in the *Republic* (491b–495b; Gribble (1999) 15–16, 219–220, 272–273; Duff (1999a) 224–226, (1999b), and (2011) 32–37; Pelling (2005) 120–121). Plutarch, in referring to this concept, employs an agrarian analogy that speaks to the discernment which must be exercised in perceiving those who could potentially become great under the right set of circumstances (*De sera* 552C–D). This same agricultural analogy is also employed in the *Lives* of Coriolanus and Alcibiades in reference to talented individuals (*Cor.* 1.2–4; *Alc.* 4.1; see also *Arat.* 10.3–4).

Another aspect of Alcibiades' characterization that also derives from the *Republic* has not yet been fully appreciated, however. I am referring to the Homeric figure of Achilles who emerges in sublimated form in the *Republic* and is redeployed by Plutarch in several *Lives* (see Nerdahl (2007) and (2012)). The prominence of the Achilles-paradigm in the *Coriolanus* has perhaps obscured its resurgence in the *Alcibiades* (on Achilles in the *Coriolanus* see Pelling (2002) 326, 388, 406; Nerdahl (2007) 108–151 and (2012) 331–353). The consensus is that the characterization of Alcibiades is informed by the wily figure of Odysseus (Gribble (1999) 269–270; Duff (2003) 96 with n. 30; Nerdahl (2007) 140–151). The “Odysseus-like cunning of Alcibiades” is thus contrasted with “the modeling of Coriolanus on Achilles” (Nerdahl (2007) 131). This is accurate as far as it goes but not the whole story by any means. This interpretation overlooks the element of Achilles that is commingled with the Odysseus-like aspect in the *Alcibiades*. In the *Coriolanus* this Achilles-element is epitomized in the adjective *thumoeides* that alludes to the source of his martial valor and the predominant characteristic that renders him a warrior to be feared on the battlefield, but also a potential threat to his fellow-citizens in civic contexts (*Cor.* 15.4). The adjective *thumoeides* first appears in the *Republic* in conjunction with the description of the ideal guardian's nature, which renders the possessor fearless (*aphobos*) and invincible and is marked by the presence of a *thumos*, which is an unconquerable and invincible thing, while being gentle toward friends but harsh toward enemies, and in possession of the additional advantage of a philosophic temperament (Pl. *Resp.* 375b–376c). Such a spirited (*thumoeides*) person will, according to Socrates/Plato, be a lover of victory and lion-like (*leontodes*) in nature (Pl. *Resp.* 586c–590b).² The portrait of the ideal guardian in the *Republic* is modeled on Homer's characterization of Achilles, whom he constantly likens to a lion and who is possessed of *thumos* (cf. *Il.* 7.228: *thumoleon*; 24.41–43 comparing Achilles to a lion, compelled by his courageous heart (*agenor thumos*) to feast on sheep). Allan Bloom, in recognizing the close interrelationship between these terms, calls spiritedness “the lion in our souls” ((1991) 405). He furthermore notes that Plato represents Socrates in the *Republic* as replacing the figure of Achilles with another paradigm ((1991) 354):

Socrates brings Achilles to the foreground in order to analyze his character and ultimately to do away with him as *the* model for the young. The figure of Achilles, more than any other teaching or law, compels the souls of Greeks and all men who pursue glory. He is the hero of heroes, admired and imitated by all. And this is what Socrates wishes to combat; he teaches that if Achilles is the model, men will not pursue philosophy, that what he stands for is inimical to the founding of the best city and the practice of the best way of life.

The model, according to Bloom, with whom Socrates replaces Achilles in the *Republic*, is none other than Socrates himself:

Socrates is engaged in a contest with Homer for the title of teacher of the Greeks – or of mankind. One of his principal goals is to put himself in place of Achilles as the authentic representation of the best human type. (Bloom (1991) 354)

The transfer of paradigmatic primacy from Achilles to Socrates (and the followers of Socrates) is addressed by Plutarch in his evaluation of Alexander the Great.

In his two epideictic speeches *De fortuna Alexandri I* and *II* (*Mor.* 326D–345B) Plutarch sees clearly the intersection of the Achilles-like man of action with the philosopher in the historical personage of Alexander the Great (on Alexander’s admiration of Achilles see 331D–E; see also Pelling (2005) 111–112). In the first of these orations he is represented as the true philosopher and as a man of action who uses military success and conquest instrumentally to spread the civilizing influence of Hellenism to subjugated “barbarian” peoples. In a series of *synkriseis*, he is represented as superior to Socrates and Plato in particular (328A–E (with reference to Alcibiades), 330F–331A; 333A (with reference to Alcibiades)). He is more effective in promoting the dissemination of Greek *paideia* than Plato, whose *Republic* is “too austere” and whose *Laws* no one needs anymore. In these epideictic speeches Alexander is the ideal philosopher-king who unifies Greek and barbarian in one cosmopolitan state guided by Greek laws and *paideia*. In the second of these orations Plutarch refers to Alexander with the terms *thumoeides* and *leontodes* (*De fort. Alex. II* 335C and 339F). This same linkage of these two adjectives recurs early in the *Alexander* (2.5) and he is surely the most Achilles-like hero of all in the *Lives*. Alexander, according to Plutarch, traces his lineage to Achilles and he openly emulates him. But in the *Life* Plutarch does not exactly represent a philosopher-king, as he does in the epideictic orations. In much of the *Life* Plutarch is at pains to portray a sexually continent Alexander in both the heterosexual and homosexual sphere (see esp. *Alex.* 21–22.6, 30.10–14; see also Stadter (1995) 228–229; Walcot (1998) 179; Beneker (2012) 103–152). He later represents an Alexander who eventually recoils from philosophy with dire consequences (see especially his explicit rejection of Aristotle, *Alex.* 74.5–6).

In the case of Alcibiades, his spirited nature is not revealed via the adjective *thumoeides*, but Plutarch twice alludes to his lion-like nature (*Alc.* 2.2, 16.2) and even says of him, in quoting a verse from some unknown poet: “No child of Achilles, but Achilles himself” (*Alc.* 23.6; see Hobbs (2000) 254). In Plato, Aristotle, and Plutarch the possession of spiritedness is a necessary but not sufficient condition for and irrational source of virtue (see Becchi). But if Alcibiades possessed a great nature informed with this spiritedness, this necessary precondition, what went wrong? Why wasn’t Socrates able to turn Alcibiades toward philosophy? How did the Socratic paradigm fail?

The answer would seem to involve a combination of excessive ambition with his vulnerability to flattery, but Alcibiades’ behavior also seems to be the product of an internal characterological makeup that skewed his positive development. The first anecdote containing an illusion to Alcibiades’ lion-like nature, when taken with the introduction, expresses this hybridization of two Homeric personae mentioned above:

His character later showed many inconsistencies, as is natural in great actions and various chance events (*tychais polytropois*). He was by nature subject to many strong passions, the

strongest of which were his love of victory (*to philoneikon*) and love of preeminence (*to philoproton*), as is clear from the anecdotes about his childhood. He was once hard pressed in a wrestling match, and to save himself from being taken down, he bit his opponent's arms, where they grasped him. Releasing his hold his opponent cried out: "Alcibiades, you bite like women do!" "Not I," he said, "but as lions do." (*Alc.* 2.1–2)

This anecdote heads a section explicitly intended to depict his character (*ethos*) and illustrate the one constant in his life, his inconsistency (*Alc.* 2.1). The first sentence in this chapter contains the adjective *polytropos*, an epithet applied to Odysseus, which has been interpreted as alluding to a tradition that compared him to Odysseus (Duff (2003) 96 n. 30; see also Nerdahl (2007) 140–151). Thus Alcibiades' variability and changeability indicated here focus attention on the Odysseus-like side of his personality, while the anecdote, with its reference to Alcibiades biting like a lion, reflects and prefigures his Achilles-like nature. Many excellent studies exist on this series of proleptic characterizing anecdotes that have added much to our understanding of Plutarch's *Alcibiades* (Russell (1966) 37–47; Duff (1999a) 205–240, (2003) 89–117; Verdegem (2010) 119–130). I do not, however, think that the main thrust of this anecdote is limited to representing Alcibiades' feminine qualities or his tyrannical bent, as recent interpretations have indicated (cf. Gribble (1999) 265–266; Duff (2003) 95–100; Verdegem (2010) 122–125). This interpretation would not be consonant with the introduction to this chapter and its masculine characterization of Alcibiades as *philoneikos* (loving victory) and *philoproton* (loving preeminence) or with the subsequent anecdotes in the series (see Frazier on ambition in this volume). These are not feminine qualities but rather are attributes of the *thumoeidic* individual and align him with Achilles. This is also brought home in a later reference to Alcibiades as Achilles mentioned above (*Alc.* 23.6). In this later reference Plutarch not only associates Alcibiades with Achilles, he also labels him Helen. In other words, he once again juxtaposes the Achilles-like with the feminine, indicative of his susceptibility to the advances of others. He is not fully Achilles-like and heroic in his temperament but, conversely, somewhat feminine (Gribble (1999) 265–266).

The key observation, in my opinion, is that Alcibiades' ambiguity, his lack of stability, his cunning and deceptive nature, his desire to win at all costs, render him unfit to profit from the Socratic paradigm (for a different interpretation of the lion imagery in this anecdote see Duff (2003) 95–100). He wants to win and he wants to be first, but he can't be bothered by rules and conventions (Nerdahl (2007) 134). Unlike Odysseus he is not a model of self-control and is self-serving in his actions (Nerdahl (2007) 131–132). His cunning versatile mind reveals shortcuts others might be loathe to take. Emblematic of this inclination is an anecdote that relates how Alcibiades thought that Pericles' conscientiousness was misplaced and that he should instead be considering how not to render accounts to the Athenians (*Alc.* 7.2). (On this anecdote see Pelling (2002) 314 and (2005) 123.)

In short, the elements of his defective Achilles-like and Odysseus-like personality clash with one another and make it impossible for him to exploit fully the capabilities his great natural ability confers. Beginning with Homer, Achilles is traditionally viewed as being better than Odysseus in terms of his character.³ As is clear from Platonic psychology, the *thumos* predisposes one emotionally to excel in admirable undertakings (*ta kala*), is receptive to training, and seeks role models (see Hobbs (2000) 58–59). Plutarch shares in this

Platonic–Aristotelian view that *thumos*, if placed in the service of and moderated by reason (*logos*), “will assist courage, and hatred of evil,” and “will aid justice” (*De virt. mor.* 451D–E; see Becchi and Opsomer). But Alcibiades is a case of flawed heroic modeling that even his association with Socrates could not overcome. He represents a failure of education (see Duff (2008) for the various models in Plutarch). Plutarch exonerates Socrates of blame by showing that the fault lies with Alcibiades’ unique hybrid personality coupled with his ambiguity and gender issues. Moreover, Alcibiades is represented as overindulging in that “primary characteristic” of Odysseus: his deceptive, trickster-like nature, without, however, possessing Odysseus’ self-control (Nerdahl (2007) 131–132, 148). In short Plutarch only hints at why the Socratic paradigm failed in the case of Alcibiades by means of intertextual allusions to Homer and Plato in arguably one of the most subtle and sophisticated characterizations in all of the *Lives*, and perhaps all of ancient biography.

3. Contrasting Catos and the Socratic Paradigm

Alcibiades is an unusual individual and one would expect that Plutarch’s account of him would deviate in its use of the Socratic paradigm from its appearance in other *Lives*. Its application in the *Lives* of Cato the Elder and Cato the Younger, for example, has ideological overtones. The former, whom I will refer to as the Censor to avoid confusion, is associated with Rome’s cultural and political self-assertion in the wake of the war with Hannibal. The other immediately came to symbolize the Stoic resistance to tyranny in his upholding of *libertas* unto death (see e.g. Wirszubski (1950) 126–147; Goar (1987); and, with special reference to Plutarch, Geiger (1979) 48–72). These two statesmen are both significant ideological symbols in the eyes of their countrymen and this was not lost on Plutarch. The figure of Socrates links thematically the *Lives* of the Elder Cato, the Younger Cato, Aristides, and Phocion. Heretofore most researchers have focused their attention exclusively on the *Phocion–Cato the Younger* pair and have not shown awareness of its presence in the *Aristides–Cato the Elder* pair (Alcalde Martin (1999); Geiger (1999); Trapp (1999); Zadorojnyi (2007)).

The use of the Socratic paradigm entails complex comparison that bridges temporal separation in a highly sophisticated metahistorical and intertextual way.⁴ In the proem to the *Lives* of Phocion and the Younger Cato, Plutarch alludes to alternate modes of comparison that exceed the bounds of individual pairs of *Lives* (see Trapp (1999) 487–488). We know that when Plutarch penned the Censor’s *Life* he had the Younger Cato in mind and that these two men are in some way linked in his mind (*Cat. Mai.* 27.7). Plutarch’s lavish praise of the Younger Cato at the conclusion of the Censor’s *Life* makes us immediately aware that no such comparably enthusiastic assessment of the Censor has been made in his *Life* that we have just read. In fact the *Life* of the Censor contains much that meets with Plutarch’s express disapproval.

4. The Censor

It is not hard to detect the source of the biographer’s ambivalence. The Censor’s (supposed) rejection of Hellenic culture was notorious and, to many Romans, an endearing feature of his personality. Plutarch frequently alludes to the non-assimilation

of Hellenic *paideia* in his Roman subjects as leading to a failure of self-control (Pelling (2000) 331–339 = (2002) 339–347; Swain (1990a) 126–145 = (1995) 229–264 and (1997) 165–187). In his view *paideia* aims at “the successful interiorization of the educational, cultural, and linguistic systems of Greek society” so as to ensure “the desired balance between the rational and the irrational sides of the soul” (Swain (1997) 173). The Socratic paradigm serves as a contrast point to expose characterological deficits in his Roman subjects *vis-à-vis* the paired Greek *Lives*.

The Censor’s *Life* explores several realms of activity that are taken up again in the *Life of Cato the Younger*. Especially notable for its recurrence is Plutarch’s examination of the way both of these men treat slaves and women. The treatment of slaves, women, and children, i.e. weaker dependants, is traditionally regarded as an index of self-control and the attainment of a philosophic temperament (*praotes*) among the ancients (see in general Harris (2001)).

The Censor is not portrayed as a Roman Socrates. In fact Plutarch makes no secret of the Censor’s contempt for all things Greek, including Socrates:

After all, even Socrates was, according to him [sc. Cato], a chatterbox and coercive, whose intention it was to lord it over his homeland by using whatever means he could, namely by undermining traditional values and by compelling his fellow citizens to modify their views so that they were no longer in conformity with the laws. (*Cat. Mai.* 23.1)⁵

Early in the *Life* the Censor’s oratorical ability is favorably compared with Socrates’ (*Cat. Mai.* 7.1). Socrates is not the man one would normally expect to be mentioned as a rhetorical paragon. This is Plutarch’s own assessment, since the general viewpoint is that Cato’s brand of oratory resembles that of Lysias, as he himself informs us (*Cat. Mai.* 7.2). The youth of Rome emulate him and associate with him (*Cat. Mai.* 4.2–5, 8.6; cf. also 19.7 and 25.3). The Censor is their role model. The Censor’s only mildly positive remark about Socrates, and it is really ambiguous at best, concerns his role as father and husband. As Plutarch relates, Cato used to say that “the only thing he admired about him [sc. Socrates] was his abiding civility and restraint in his dealings with a shrewish wife and retarded children” (*Cat. Mai.* 20.3). The most poignant example of Socrates’ tender interaction with his wife and his youngest son, it will be recalled, occurs in the *Phaedo* (60a–b). This repeated comparative evocation of Socrates occurs in no other Roman *Lives* and is one of the main connecting links between the *Lives* of Cato the Elder and Cato the Younger.

More troubling still is the Censor’s behavior toward his slaves. Cato, we are told, regularly subjected those slaves who delivered less than attentive service at the dinner table to a postprandial lashing (*Cat. Mai.* 21.4). The Censor’s punishment of slaves at symposia requires further scrutiny because Plutarch describes a negative transformation in the Censor’s behavior over time:

Early on, when Cato was still poor and serving in the army, he found no fault at all with the meals that were served to him. Instead, he stated that it was shameful to quarrel with a slave for the sake of one’s belly. Later however, as his circumstances improved, when he entertained friends and colleagues, no sooner was dinner over than he would punish those who had been remiss at all in any aspect of the service or preparation of the feast by beating them with a leather strap. (*Cat. Mai.* 21.3–4)

It is important to note that it is not the mark of a *sapiens*, as he is characterized by Cicero and Livy, to behave in this manner. This type of behavior was rejected by Socrates, who

preferred edifying topics of conversation at the dinner table and whose laudable behavior was famously extolled by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*.

The depiction of flawed self-mastery *vis-à-vis* one's own slaves is a central issue of the time and its depiction against the backdrop of edifying symposia is surely not accidental. Symposia were social functions in which an individual's "civilized behavior patterns" or lack thereof could be scrutinized behind "a pretence of entertainment" (Whitmarsh (2005) 32). Literary depictions of symposia could thus serve to call attention to social norms or their violation. The passage above needs to be read with one that follows it in the *Life* that refers to the type of discussions permitted at the Censor's dinner parties:

He tried to outdo himself also with the feasts that he provided on his farm. He would always invite his friends from the neighboring farms and the surrounding areas and would have a delightful time with them. Nor was it only his contemporaries who found his company pleasant and who sought him out. He appealed also to the young (*tois neois*), since he had, after all, undergone so many valuable experiences and since he was familiar with so many writings and important speeches. He regarded the table as the very best creator of friendships and, while considerable praise of fine and upstanding citizens was allowed, considerable neglect of those who were worthless and wicked was the order of the day, since Cato would permit neither censure nor commendation of such men to gain admittance to the party. (*Cat. Mai.* 25.2–3)⁶

Plutarch brings out his Socrates-like role as exemplar, especially for the youth, in this passage. This is an important theme throughout the *Life* (Pérez Jiménez (2002) 109–111). Yet his harsh treatment of slaves reflects negatively on Cato qua role model, especially against the backdrop of moralizing discussions.

5. The Younger Cato

If we turn to the *Life of the Younger Cato* we encounter a dramatic scene that abruptly calls into question the Younger Cato's self-mastery and treatment of his slaves. I am referring to the prelude to his suicide and the depiction of his death (Geiger (1999); Trapp (1999); Zadorojnyi (2007)). We are first made aware of Cato's state of mind at a symposium the night prior to his death. Cato rises to the defense of one of the paradoxes of the Stoic position that "the good man alone is free, and that all the bad are slaves," which has been opposed by an unnamed Peripatetic who is present (*Cat. Min.* 67). Cato's long reply is delivered in a tone that is loud, harsh, and astonishingly contentious. The vehemence of this verbal onslaught, we are informed, signals to the onlookers that Cato has decided to take his own life. His emotional volatility is again underscored when he begins to raise his voice at his slaves who do not bring him his sword and ends by striking one of them on the mouth with his fist so hard that he injures his hand, now in a state of anger and shouting loudly (*Cat. Min.* 68.4–5). Rising to his feet and fixing a terrifying gaze upon his son, he proceeds to mislead and deceive him as to his (Cato's) true intentions. This type of behavior toward slaves is explicitly rejected by Plutarch (*De cohib. ira* 459B–460C, 461A–462A, 463B) and Seneca (*De ira* 2.25.4, 3.1.4, 3.24.2, 3.35.1–3, 3.39.2–4) in their treatises on restraining rage (see Harris (2001) 317–336).

Cato clearly does not embody the calm and serene Stoic sage here in the final moments of his life. This comportment unbecoming of a philosopher is juxtaposed with the

eminently philosophic pastime of reading Plato's *Phaedo*, bearing here its ancient title of *On the Soul*.⁷ We are informed no fewer than four times that Cato is reading or returning to his reading of this dialogue, the classic portrait of philosophic death (*Cat. Min.* 68.2, 68.3, 68.4, 70.2). This striking contrast reflects the culmination of the Socrates paradigm, alluded to in the *Life* (cf. *Cat. Min.* 46.1). Through mention of this dialogue an educated audience is prompted to recollect and contrast Cato's agitated final moments with Socrates' calm bearing to the detriment of our image of the former.⁸

Cato's mode of death is equally divergent (*Cat. Min.* 70). It has been aptly described as "this botched up, grotesquely brutal hara-kiri" (Zadorojnyi (2007) 219). Cato, after receiving his sword, examines its blade and says: "Now I am my own master." He then returns to his reading of the *Phaedo* and we are informed that he has managed to read it through twice completely. After sleeping for a while he summons his freedmen Butas and doctor Cleanthes. Cleanthes bandages his hand. Left alone he then attempts to kill himself with his sword, but because of his injured hand the thrust is not lethal and his bowels sag out of the wound. His servants, summoned by the noise, discover him still alive. His doctor tries to replace his bowels and sew up the wound but Cato thrusts him away, rips open the wound, claws at his bowels with his hands, and so dies. Only Plutarch's account provides us with details such as the striking of the slave and the repeated references to Cato's resumption of reading the dialogue until he has read it through twice. The other major accounts of this event that we possess lack these details (App. *B Civ.* 2.99; Cassius Dio 43.11.4–5; Flor. 2.13.71–2; Livy, *Per.* 114; [Caes.] *B Afr.* 88.3–4).⁹

The Socrates-motif is also found in the *Life of Phocion* (Trapp (1999) 487–498; see also Gehrke (1976) 139–141; Tritle (1988) 30–33; Alcalde Martín (1999) 159–171; Duff (1999a) 131–158; Pelling (2005) 115–116). The difference is that Phocion's death reminded the Athenians of Socrates' end and was not antithetical to it (*Phoc.* 38.5). Phocion and Cato may both go around barefoot in public as Socrates customarily did (*Phoc.* 4.4; *Cat. Min.* 6.6, 44.1, 50.1), both underwent philosophic training that informed in some way their political activities (*Phoc.* 3.1 (referring to Cicero's critique of Cato, who acted as though he lived in Plato's commonwealth), 4.1–2, 5.4–5, 32.6–7; *Cat. Min.* 4.2, 10.1–3, 46.1), but, in a crisis situation, only Phocion maintains fidelity to the Socratic paradigm and thus faces death with admirable calmness and élan (*Phoc.* 36.1). Cato's behavior in contrast appears to cast doubt on the depth of his commitment to philosophy and successful internalization of its precepts.¹⁰ The possession of inner calm founded on conviction so vividly depicted in the *Phaedo* and reduplicated in Phocion's death scene is notably lacking in Cato's final moments. His frenetic reading and rereading of the *Phaedo* may serve to underscore this. Earlier in the *Life*, his overt display of immoderate grief at the death of his half-brother Caepio is interpreted by Plutarch as signaling a failure in his philosophic training (*Cat. Min.* 11.3–8). A failing shared by another contemporary Roman devotee of Greek philosophy, Cicero, whose overwhelming grief at the death of his daughter Tullia is regarded by Plutarch as a sign of the statesman's philosophic insufficiency (*Cic.* 41.8).

Michael Trapp ((1999) 495) has rightly pointed out that Socrates is an intermediary foil sharing resemblances that allow comparison of Cato and Phocion in a way that obviates the need for a formal *synkrisis* at the end, which this pair lacks. He also notes (correctly in my opinion) that the message – whatever it may be – that Plutarch is seeking to communicate "bears more closely on Cato than on Phocion" ((1999) 496). According

to Trapp's view, the death of Phocion, which is so similar to that of Socrates, sheds clearer light on the true nature of Cato's death, especially since Plutarch went to great lengths to elaborate the account of Cato's death with unflattering details, or at least not suppress them. Plutarch calls Cato on three separate occasions a *philosophos* (*Cat. Mai.* 27.7; *Brut.* 2.1; *Pomp.* 40.2) and this is not a designation he often lavishes on his Roman heroes.¹¹ He does not call Phocion a *philosophos*, however, and that may be the rub. Phocion acts in all situations and under all circumstances like a philosopher. No labeling is required (see *De. prof. virt.* 81C–D).

Trapp then suggests that Plutarch's intent was not so much to criticize Cato himself, but rather to criticize subtly "earlier (Roman) writing about Cato," such as Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (1.71ff.) and the writings of Seneca (Trapp (1999) 496).¹² This is undoubtedly the case. Cicero had employed the Cato–Socrates comparison to embellish the man's legend. For Cicero, Cato in particular exemplified the principle that the philosopher's way of life is really a preparation for death. In a particularly telling passage Cicero compares Cato's and Socrates' deaths, and paraphrases Plato's *Phaedo* (*Tusc.* 1.71–75; cf. *Pl. Phd.* 67d and 80e). Undoubtedly there was more of this in Cicero's lost work *Cato*, in response to which Caesar penned his scathing *Anti-Cato*, also lost to us. Cicero's *Cato*, as Goar ((1987) 15) notes, "established Cato as the Roman model of the Stoic sage – a fact of great importance for later adherents of Stoicism." Seneca's frequent juxtaposing of the deaths of Cato with Socrates attests to this (*Sen. Ep.* 67.7, 71.17, 98.12, 104.28f.; *Prov.* 3.4, 3.12ff.; *Tranq.* 16.1; *Marc.* 22.3).¹³ Much of the material critical of Cato that Plutarch presents in the *Life* appears to be drawn from the *Anti-Cato* (see e.g. Geiger (1979) 54–56). It is notable that Plutarch, in his *Life of Julius Caesar* (54.6), mentions that both of these works continued to have many eager readers in his own day because of Caesar and Cato. The presentation of this material in the *Life* and the nature of the juxtaposed portrait of Phocion, in my opinion, are expressive of Plutarch's opposition to Cicero's idealized image of the man qua Stoic sage and its survival into the Imperial period, especially in the philosophical works of Seneca. Plutarch's portraits go a long way toward undermining this image of the proto-Stoic Censor and his grandson Cato, the paradigmatic Stoic sage.

Plutarch generally evinces skepticism when it comes to his Roman heroes (Swain (1990a) 126–145 = (1995) 229–264). The physical violence directed at a weaker individual, the messy and awkwardly executed suicide, the prolonged reading of the *Phaedo*, are all anti-heroic elements that in no way ennoble the protagonist in his final hours. If Plutarch is attacking the Roman *synkrisis* of Cato with Socrates, then he is really questioning Cato's status and validity as a philosopher as well as his exemplary role as the "solemnly revered and much-imitated model of heroic Stoic suicide" (Griffin (1986) 194). In Plutarch's opinion, Cato seems to have lacked this spirit of moderation so essential to political efficacy, as numerous passages in the *Life* demonstrate (Duff (1999a) 147–158; Beck (2004) 105–114). The comparison of the Athenian founder of moral philosophy with Cato may have appeared invidious to him, a comparison first drawn, as far as we know, by Cicero. The ancient conception of what it meant to be a philosopher hinged more on adopting a way of life than on the production of original philosophic doctrines (Hadot (1997) and (2002); Frede (2000) 3–19). Knowledge of philosophy was not alone sufficient. This was the legacy of Socrates.

There is another issue involving the figure of Socrates, however, that helps to explain a Platonist philosopher's anti-Stoic attitude. Socrates was readily absorbed into Stoic and Cynic philosophical circles in the first and second centuries CE (see e.g. Döring (1979); Long (1988) and (2002); Striker (1994)). The Stoics claimed Socrates for themselves early on. Philodemus informs us that "the Stoics actually wanted to be called 'Socratics'" (Long (1988) 151). As A.A. Long observes, "From Zeno to Epictetus, that is to say throughout the history of the Stoa, Socrates is the philosopher with whom the Stoics most closely aligned themselves" ((1988) 160). Among the Academic, Peripatetic, Cynic, Stoic, and Skeptic schools, an ongoing dispute had long been underway as to which school deserved the right to lay claim to being the legitimate successors to the Socratic model (Dihle (2000)). In an indirect way Plutarch appears to be undermining the Stoic claim by subtly attacking its leading Roman representative. Cicero may have led the way with his attack on Cato's rigid and unrealistic brand of Stoicism in the *Pro Murena* (60–65), which he contrasts unfavorably with his own training by moderate and temperate masters schooled in the Academic and Peripatetic tradition (*illi a Platone et Aristotele, moderati homines et temperati*). If Cato had received training from these masters, Cicero asserts, he may not have been a "better man or braver or more temperate or more just," but he would have been "a little more disposed to kindness" (*Mur.* 64). His attack hinges on paralleling Cato's philosophical stance with the unrealistic so-called "Stoic paradoxes" (*SVF* III 35–37, III 41, III 117–118).

6. The Censor as the Intellectual Precursor of Stoicism

In a way Aristides' just and moral behavior in the political sphere anticipates Socrates' ethical philosophy, much as, for the Romans at any rate, the Censor's supposed exemplary behavioral repertoire anticipates the Stoicism that eventually won the day in Rome. Plutarch, however, adds a touch of philosophical training to the Censor's *Life*. He inserts a scene that depicts the young Censor's first encounter with Greek philosophy, his training in Pythagorean doctrine by Nearchus that directed him toward a life of simplicity and self-discipline (*Cat. Mai.* 2.3–4). As David Sansone (1989) in his commentary notes, the only other source that mentions this most likely fictitious encounter is Cicero in his *De senectute* 12.41 and it is most likely of Cicero's own invention. In his commentary on *De senectute*, Powell also thinks that Plutarch is depending on Cicero here, but is less inclined to think that Cicero is "indulging in completely unfounded invention at this point" (Powell (1988) 182 ad loc.). We know that Plutarch was familiar with this work of Cicero's because he explicitly cites it (*Sen.* 12.42) in his *Life of Titus Flamininus* (18.10). Use of Cicero's *De senectute* is also detected in his introduction of the theme of frugality in which he cites the anecdote about Cato's visit to the neighboring farm of Manius Curius (*Cat. Mai.* 2.2). While this anecdote is referred to in other ancient sources, only Cicero in *De senectute* connects this anecdote explicitly with the Censor (Plut. *Mor.* 194F; *Apophth. Rom.* Curius 2; Athen. 10.419a (= Megacles, *FGrH* 4.443); Plin. *HN* 19.26 (87); Flor. 1.13.22; Val. Max. 4.3.5a).

Cicero's idealized portrait of the Censor not only makes him out to be a *sapiens*, a philosopher in a pre-philosophic era in Rome, but also contrasts him positively with Socrates (Padberg (1933); Gnauk (1936); Kammer (1964)). For Cicero at any rate, Cato's superiority as a paradigm derives not just from his words, as in the case of Socrates, but from his deeds as well (*Amic.* 2.6–10). Cicero holds up the Censor's behavior in old age as exemplary and praiseworthy. The vigor in old age that Cicero praises is an ambiguous trait for Plutarch because it leads to immoderate behavior, actions never mentioned or even misrepresented by Cicero. For example, one immediate consequence of his wife's death is that the Censor takes a young slave girl as his concubine (*Cat. Mai.* 24.1–10). This act is the source of estrangement between father and son. Cato attempts to eradicate the problem by contracting a marriage with a young woman of lower status who is a fraction of his age. His explanation to his son that he wishes to sire more sons is branded a boldfaced lie by Plutarch, who evidently regards the old man's inability to master his passion as reprehensible (*Cat. Mai.* comp. 33/6.1–2). This entire chain of events is related in great detail by Plutarch, who does not always delve into his subject's private lives with the enthusiasm and graphic detail of a Suetonius (Beck (2007); Beneker (2012) and in this volume). Both the Censor and Cato the Younger lie to their sons, according to Plutarch!

7. Women and Marriage in the Life of Cato the Younger

The *Life of the Younger Cato* also thematizes the topic of women and marriage. It contains a series of anecdotes that cast a dim light on the protagonist's relations with women (24–25; see also 7 and 52.5–9).¹⁴ Especially troubling to Plutarch was Cato's divorce of his wife Marcia and betrothal of her to his friend Hortensius (*Cat. Min.* 25.1–13; Duff (1999a) 158–159). Do these stories exemplify the “artificiality of Cato the Younger's stoicism” (Stadter (1995) 234)? Philip Stadter comments on Cato's behavior: “His insensitive lack of common human feeling is the other side of philosophic rigidity.” We recall that Plutarch subjected this same trait, manifested toward slaves above all, to a polemical attack in the *Life of the Elder Cato*. Both the Censor and his equally illustrious great-grandson appear not to have profited much from their philosophic training in their dealings with their fellow human beings.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion it appears that Plutarch inserted the figure of Socrates into the *Lives* of Alcibiades, Aristides, Cato the Elder, Phocion, and Cato the Younger as a heuristic device to bring out in subtle and usually negative ways the different qualities of his protagonists, who appear superficially to share similar traits. In the case of Alcibiades, Plutarch must explain the failure of Socrates to set Alcibiades on the right course despite his possession of the right attributes. The defects in his character are brought out by allusions to Odysseus and Achilles. Socrates' failure is thus explained implicitly as resulting from Alcibiades' idiosyncratic and defective character, which exemplifies

on the one hand the wily versatility of Odysseus without the self-control and, on the other hand, the *thumocidic* ambitious nature of Achilles in tandem with a feminine element.

In the case of the Censor and Cato the Younger, Plutarch consciously seeks to discredit the ideologically motivated comparison of these men with Socrates that Cicero presented to posterity. While Aristides and Phocion are positively compared to Socrates, who clearly functions as a positive canon, the Censor and Cato the Younger fall well short. Both deviate most strongly from the Socratic paradigm in their violent treatment of slaves, but their relations with women are also questioned.

While the Younger Cato's acceptance of Greek culture preserves him from repeating some of the harsh behavior of his great-grandfather, his adherence to even radical elements of Stoic doctrine remains his Achilles' heel. A negative impact of his assimilation of Stoicism may ironically be exhibited in his treatment of women. We perceive an instrumentalization of marriage and an absence of feeling strikingly reminiscent of the Censor's thorough exploitation, and callous discarding, of slaves and animals. Not surprisingly the treatment of women, children, slaves, and animals is constantly mentioned by Plutarch in *De cohibenda ira* as indicative of a man's self-control, the ultimate goal of most ancient philosophical schools. In contrasting the Censor and the Younger Cato with Socrates, Plutarch wants us to realize that Late Republican Rome had made some progress that could be directly attributed to their increasing assimilation of Greek culture. He deploys the Socratic paradigm in these Roman *Lives* to confront and undermine the idealized Ciceronian images of the proto-Stoic Censor and his great-grandson Cato, the paradigmatic Stoic sage.

NOTES

- 1 The citations of Plutarch's *Lives* in this chapter follow the numbering of the Loeb Classical Library edition, edited by Bernadotte Perrin.
- 2 Cf. also Callicles' description of the training of the best young men who are likened to lions in the *Georgias* 483e–484a. On this see Duff (2003) 98.
- 3 Traditionally Odysseus was regarded as inferior to Achilles in terms of his character. See, e.g., Plato's *Hippias Minor* 363B–365C with Hobbs (2000) 93–98.
- 4 See Zadorojnyi (2012) for a discussion of the metahistorical in Plutarch's biographies.
- 5 Translation Sansone with some modification.
- 6 Translation Sansone.
- 7 Plato (*Resp.* 8.548e–549a) associates the harsh treatment of slaves with the uneducated man.
- 8 The *exemplum Socratis* includes *inter alia* the restraint of anger. Cf. e.g. Sen. *De ira* 3.13.3 and Plut. *De cohib. ira* 455B. Socrates' calm and jovial bearing is frequently alluded to in the *Phaedo*. See Plut. *De tranq. anim.* 466e, 475e for Plutarch's own very positive assessment of Socrates' calm bearing in the face of death. See Pelling (2005) 110–111.
- 9 On the provenance of this account see Geiger (1979) 48–72.
- 10 We remember Plutarch's early judgment that Cato's apparent "reluctance to be persuaded made his learning more laborious" (*Cat. Min.* 1.8). His rereading of the *Phaedo* in such a short time span might seem to allude to this defect. Another problem that may have troubled Cato (at least in Plutarch's conceptual world) is that Socrates in the *Phaedo* (61c–62c) appears to forbid suicide explicitly. On suicide in the *Phaedo* see Warren (2001) 91–106. On the Stoic conception of suicide as permissible for rational reasons in certain exigencies see *SVF* III

- 757–768 with Gigon's ((1951) 476) note in his edition of the *Tusculan Disputations*; Griffin (1976) 367–388 and (1986) 72–75; Warren (2001) 100–101.
- 11 The other notable Roman who receives this appellation is M. Terentius Varro (*Rom.* 12.3). Cf. Swain (1990b) 195 and (1990a) = (1995) 244 n. 69. Cato's daughter Porcia also receives this appellation in the *Life of Brutus* (13.3–4), but overzealous editorial efforts have occluded this fact. The adoption of Sintenis' conjecture *philostorgos* in Ziegler's Teubner edition for the manuscript reading of *philosophos* is clearly erroneous.
 - 12 Trapp himself does not in the end subscribe to this view. See also Geiger ((1999) 357–364) on the subsequent tradition of the Cato/Socrates coupling.
 - 13 Collected by Geiger (1979) 64–65 n. 61.
 - 14 We note in contrast that Plutarch relates how Phocion's wife collects his bones for interment near the family hearth in a poignant expression of love and devotion (*Phoc.* 37.5). Cato's son seems to have problems with women too (*Cat. Min.* 73.1).

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

J.P. Hershbell's (1988) article still provides a good point of departure for the study of Socrates in Plutarch. C.B.R. Pelling's (2005) more recent treatment is a nuanced account of Socrates in the *Moralia* and the *Lives* with special emphasis on the *Daimonion of Socrates* and on the *Life of Alcibiades*. On the Socratic paradigm in the *Life of the Younger Cato* in particular see Trapp (1999), Geiger (1999), and Zadorojnyi (2007).

CHAPTER 32

Fate and Fortune

Frances B. Titchener

Fate means different things to different people at different times and no less so in the writings of Plutarch. In his argument for Plutarch's belief in the general predetermination of history, Swain (1989c) identifies twenty different terms associated with a spectrum ranging from chance to providence. His fullest appendix entries are those for *daimon* (299) and *tyche* (301). These words are not identical but, as blurry synonyms, enjoy an "easy exchange."¹ Swain provides many examples of *daimon* meaning "lesser god" or "divine spirit," and even more of *tyche* as "chance," "fortune(-s) (general situation), and providence." This chapter will refer almost exclusively to *tyche* when discussing fate and fortune, mindful of the extreme flexibility of the word and concept.² Tatum's exasperation with the slippery term is understandable: "It also denotes the merest and inexplicable chance, coincidence or happenstance (in which use *tyche* sometimes enters as nothing more than mere cliché). And it invokes varying types of providential forces, good or ill in temper, particular or historical in scope. It pervades every genre, including (by the Hellenistic period) historiography. The word is often used inconsistently even by a single writer, and all too often the word is so vague that it resists specific definition" (Tatum (2010) 449). But we can still make some observations about Plutarch's thoughts on fate, and most particularly, how he uses fate as a theme and method of characterization in his *Parallel Lives*.

In the *Moralia*,³ fortune is more or less irrelevant because the Divine is in control, but in the *Parallel Lives*, *tyche* means not luck or fortune, "but often it is made into a guiding force and is used in contexts where we might have expected God or providence" (Swain (1989d) 273). Plutarch gives us a good example of this in the *Comparison* of Nicias and Crassus (5.1): "But Crassus, through the quantity of his errors, forfeited offering any useful foothold to fate, so that it is remarkable not that his stupidity was overcome by the might of the Parthians, but that his stupidity overcame the Romans' habitual

good luck.”⁴ Fate is shown as a partner in enterprise, needing only an opening to bring good effect. The guiding force still needs an anchorpoint or target. Since fate is the opposite of choice, it can be a powerful design element in historiographical and biographical writing, since history in particular can be seen as a series of choices, and studied that way too, particularly the circumstances surrounding those choices, and their consequences. Choices by governments or countries are edifying and well worth studying. In the early eighth century BCE, Sparta chose to fill her grain needs permanently by conquering Messenia. This military adventure forever changed Spartan life and culture, and thus indirectly almost everything about Greek history. In 510 BCE the Roman people overthrew monarchs and monarchy both, rejecting one-man rule and choosing for a form of government rather a republic that would last almost half a millennium. After the battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, the Athenians chose (with the encouragement of Themistocles) to spend their budget in a new way, and form a navy. That navy helped defend Greece against Persia in a series of naval battles, culminating in the victory of the united Greeks at Salamis.

But it is not Rome, but Romans, not Sparta, but Spartans, whose choices catch and hold us most firmly. The decision-makers do not need to be “real,” as in having been alive, nor even human, in the case of the gods and demi-gods. We are riveted by Agamemnon’s terrible decision to sacrifice his own daughter, and moved by Achilles’ choice to release Hector’s body to Priam. Both Achilles and Agamemnon might well argue that they did not in fact have any choice but were compelled to act as they did, but it is still clear that there was plenty of room for bad choices and their repercussions in Greek mythology. Part of the appeal and draw of tragedy, surely, is watching others deal unrestrainedly with bad divorce, blended families, overbearing parents, and the challenges of balancing work and family life. Presumably very few people went as far as Medea in her vengeance, but equally presumably plenty of people had thought about it. Jocasta could live with uncertainty, but not with the truth. Was Helen abducted or did she want to go? It is surely better to contemplate these situations from a third-person perspective, but for biographers, choice takes on a truly central role in the discussion of the history of individuals. We are riveted by Caesar at the Rubicon, Leonidas at Thermopylae, or Alexander – almost anywhere we meet the king, our attention is attracted and held, because all of us can identify. Our choices may not take place on the grand scale of Plutarch’s heroes, but we know what it is like to be forced to choose, and our enjoyment is vicarious at learning about the choices of others, and the consequences of those choices.

For Plutarch, choice and decision have more to do with responsibility. Sometimes Plutarch acknowledges that a particular unexpected and unpredictable event was the deciding factor in the resolution in some conflict: “it chanced that on that day,” but almost by definition, his subjects make choices that affect the course of history, sometimes disastrously so, and Plutarch takes that into account in the comparisons that follow most pairs of *Lives*. In all fairness, Plutarch chooses subjects for his biographies that will provide good examples for his readers to emulate, and these subjects are more likely than not to be men of action. But not all subjects are men of action, or good examples, for that matter. So our real interest in Plutarch and his use of fate in the biographies is not looking for a *deus ex machina*, but how he uses fate and choice as compositional devices.

Because for better or for worse, choices are made, since otherwise reader interest diminishes. “The gods willed it” effectively ends the pursuit of truth. Even in the case of real serendipity, Plutarch may manipulate the role of chance, preferring the illusion of a logical sequence to the paralysis left in the wake of the admission that sometimes things just plain happen. A good example of this can be found by comparing Thucydides’ and Plutarch’s narratives about the Athenians’ capture of about three hundred Spartiates on the island of Sphacteria, in 425 BCE. The Athenians had sent a detachment of ships to Corcyra. On the way, a storm blew the fleet ashore at Pylos. The general Demosthenes, in disgrace but unofficially accompanying the fleet, tried to persuade the soldiers to fortify the area since it would be a natural headquarters for escaping helots, and relatively easy to strengthen and defend. This was in fact done, and the Spartans responded immediately. As both sides tried to gain strategic advantage, the Athenians were able to cut off a detachment of Spartans on the island of Sphacteria, bringing all military action to a halt as the Spartans tried to make terms. Athens was certain of victory and refused Spartan offers, but as the weeks went by, the Athenians became restive. The demagogue Cleon challenged the generals to take care of business, at which point we are told that Nicias offered to resign his command on the spot in favor of Cleon. Cleon after some discussion accepted the command, mustered troops, and arrived at Pylos with reinforcements. As advertised, within twenty days the clandestine supply lines to the island were disrupted, the heavy forest coverage was destroyed by fire, and the Spartans surrendered. Demosthenes and Cleon returned to Athens victorious, with 292 Spartiate captives. This success launched Cleon into popular favor, and fueled an overconfident Athenian foreign policy that nevertheless resulted four years later in a treaty whose terms the Spartans used to recover these prisoners.

Plutarch refers to Cleon’s “good luck” in this enterprise and, like Thucydides (perhaps following him), has downplayed Demosthenes’ strategic cleverness, emphasizing instead the role of fate. The mere fact of Cleon’s involvement in the Pylos campaign makes it unlikely Thucydides would describe it in any positive way, since Cleon was more responsible than anyone else for Thucydides’ exile after the unsuccessful Amphipolis campaign. Plutarch disliked Cleon for his low-class, rabble-rousing ways, and admiration for Thucydides would reinforce the negative picture Plutarch leaned toward. But most importantly, it suited Plutarch’s own narrative to go along with the picture of Cleon as a loud, vulgar, brawling incompetent. Thus, in *Nicias* we see Cleon hesitating and confused (7.3), succeeding only through “good luck.” Plutarch may mean that Cleon’s “good luck” was the successful outcome of the military action at Pylos which he had no right to expect (*Nic.* 8.1; cf. *Thuc.* 4.39.3). However, Cleon’s seemingly impromptu performance in the Assembly was probably carefully orchestrated with Demosthenes, who had hitherto been unable to secure the light-armed troops he needed. Demosthenes had little political influence of his own at that time, since his family, about whom we know nothing, was evidently not prominent, and he had not yet established his military reputation. Therefore, he needed a smart ally in the Assembly who could get things done. There is reason to believe much of Demosthenes’ “good luck” had actually been planned well in advance. *Someone* got permission for Demosthenes to use the fleet as it sailed for Corcyra, and *someone* (maybe Demosthenes himself) told the inexperienced Cleon exactly what troops were needed and arranged for those troops to be available. The friendly ship which “happened” to appear at the appropriate time carrying the

appropriate tools and supplies (Thuc. 4.9.1) may well have been there by prearrangement. Likewise the “accidental” fire which removed the trees forming the major obstacle to Athenian invasion of Sphacteria was presumably deliberately set, when the wind was right (Thuc. 4.29.3–30.2). Nicias seems to have played into Cleon’s (and Demosthenes’) hands by surrendering his command. Replacing luck and chance with decision and choice helps strengthen the effect Plutarch is trying for, which is to show Nicias as a cowardly and ineffectual man whose cowardice and ineffectiveness helped bring down the Athenian empire. Nicias prefers to hedge his bets with fate, through sacrifices and donations, rather than take responsibility for choice and decision. He is not a man of action.

Plutarch sets up the same contrast between rationality and superstition in *Pericles* (38.2), quoting Theophrastus’ *Ethics* to illustrate the great Athenian general’s despair while dying of the plague: “While ailing, Pericles showed to someone of his friends who had come to see how he was faring an amulet hung around his neck by the women, as if to show that since he was enduring such foolishness, he must be faring very badly indeed.” Pericles was the ultimate fifth-century Athenian intellectual, friendly with philosophers like Anaxagoras, well educated, and thoughtful, and one of the most successful and frequently reelected Athenian generals ever. He was immune to superstition about eclipses (see below), in sharp contrast to Nicias, whose superstition and fear were arguably the main reasons for the failure of the Athenian expedition to Sicily. But overwhelmed and terrified at the end of his life, he is no longer a man of action, but submerged in fate.

Let’s pursue this comparison between Nicias and Pericles, following in the steps of the Great Comparer himself. Plutarch felt strongly that religion and religious ceremonies were an important part of any politically active individual’s life, but that Nicias’ predilection went beyond religion into superstition. In the comparison of Nicias to Pericles, specifically in terms of their associates, Nicias’ flunky Hiero, and the great philosopher Anaxagoras, Nicias comes off very much the worse. At *Nic.* 5.3, Plutarch uses language about Nicias’ relationship with Hiero similar to that with which he describes Pericles’ relationship with Anaxagoras (*Per.* 4.4). Hiero is some kind of butler, or assistant, to Nicias, providing an interface with visitors and the public at large. Whereas the Nicias–Hieron relationship is delineated with an air of disapproval (Hieron is called Nicias’ “fellow-actor,” *syntragodon*), the Pericles–Anaxagoras relationship is regarded favorably. In fact, Plutarch says specifically that one of the advantages Pericles derived from association with Anaxagoras and exposure to his ideas was that Pericles was thereby freed from superstition. Plutarch assigns superstition to those who don’t understand natural phenomena, and are afflicted by intense fixation on and fear of divine intervention (*Per.* 6.1). The contrast is striking between the two relationships, the one suppressing ignorance (Pericles and Anaxagoras) and the other at least partially promoting it (Nicias and Hiero).

It is true that in the biography Plutarch does not make any direct comment on Nicias and his fate, but in the *synkrisis* he calls Crassus less deserving of reproach than Nicias because “Crassus did not surrender to fate or let himself be deceived by the enemy, but rather gave in to his friends’ strong warnings, and was treacherously killed” (5.3). Nicias, on the other hand, out of shameful and ignoble hopes of personal safety, having surrendered to his enemies, made his own death more shameful. It is also

true that Nicias could not control the eclipse itself. However, eclipses, their causes and timing, were in fact understood, and Plutarch makes a point of saying that it was the role of a wise leader to help explain such things to the less educated. Nicias makes an even worse error, though, than not understanding that an eclipse is a meteorological phenomenon. He actually misinterprets the omen as bad, instead of good. But worst of all, he gives up any choice he actually had, and rather than retreat with his army, as he had planned, he “ignored almost everything else and spent his time on sacrifices and divination, without moving, until in a combined assault the enemy invested the Athenians’ fortifications and camp by land, while surrounding and blockading the harbor with their fleets.” Nicias had no control over the occurrence of the eclipse, but the failure to predict and explain it was his own, and the arguably fatal decision to do nothing, his own as well.

Consider the following event: There are at least three extant versions of the famous dinner party Sextus Pompey held on his ship for Antony and Octavian, those of Plutarch, Appian, and Dio, given here in relatively chronological order of their authors’ lives.

Plutarch’s *Antony* 32: “after they had reached agreement, they invited one another to dine. They cast lots to decide who should be host, and it fell to Pompey to entertain the company first ... Pompey anchored his ship close inshore, constructed a pontoon between it and the headland and warmly welcomed his guests on board. But later, when the company had become thoroughly convivial, and jokes concerning Antony’s passion for Cleopatra were being bandied freely about, Menas the pirate came up to Pompey and whispered to him out of the guests’ hearing, ‘Shall I cut the cables and make you master not just of Sicily and Sardinia but of the whole Roman empire?’ Pompey thought over the remark for a moment, and then burst out, ‘Menas, you should have acted, not spoken to me about this beforehand. Now we must be content with things as they are. I do not break my word.’”

Appian, *B Civ.* 5.73: “Such were the conditions agreed, which were drawn up in a document and signed and sent to Rome for safe-keeping by the Vestals. The principals at once entertained each other, drawing lots to decide the order. Pompeius acted as host first, on board his flagship moored alongside the mole, and on the following days Antonius and Octavian erected tents, also on the mole, on the pretext that they should all feast each other beside the sea but perhaps in order to avoid any suspicion of a plot. Not that they were unwary even so: their ships were moored close by, guards were stationed around, and those actually attending the dinner carried daggers concealed beneath their clothing. It is said that while they were banqueting on the ship Menodorus sent a message to Pompeius advising him to attack his guests and exact vengeance for the wrong done to his father and brother, and seize back his father’s power by the swiftest of coups; for as he, Menodorus, was with the ships he would see that no one escaped. Pompeius’ answer was worthy of his ancestry and his situation: ‘How I wish Menodorus had acted without asking me!’ for it was acceptable for Menodorus to break an oath, but not Pompeius.”

Dio *RH* 48.38.2: “After this the leaders as well as the rest received and entertained each other, first Sextus on his ship and then Caesar and Antony on the shore; for Sextus so far surpassed them in military strength that he would not disembark to meet them on the mainland until they had gone aboard his ship. And although, by this arrangement, he might have murdered them both while they were in the small boat with only a few followers, as Menas, in fact, advised, he was unwilling to do so. Indeed to Antony, who had

possession of his father's house in the Carinae (the name of a region in the city of Rome), he uttered a jest in the happiest manner, saying that he was entertaining them in the Carinae; for this is also the name for the keels of ships. Nevertheless, he did not act toward them in any way as if he recalled the past with bitterness, and on the following day he was not only feasted in turn but also betrothed his daughter to Marcus Marcellus, Caesar's nephew."

Shakespeare devotes an entire scene to this anecdote (*Antony and Cleopatra* II.vii), and it is no wonder that he chose this vivid and dramatic setting. Shakespeare interlaces Menas' attempts to get Sextus Pompey's attention. He prolongs the action by having a false start: Menas can't get Sextus to leave the party for a private word. Just as we are about to hear what it is Menas wants to say, the action is derailed by a funny conversation between a very drunk Lepidus and a well-on-the-way-to-drunkenness Antony. Lepidus wants to hear fun facts about Egypt:

MENAS: [Aside to POMPEY.] Pompey, a word.
 POMPEY: [Aside to MENAS.] Say in mine ear: what is't?
 MENAS: [Aside to POMPEY.] Forsake thy seat, I do beseech thee, captain, And hear me speak a word.
 POMPEY: [Aside to MENAS.] Forbear me till anon – This wine for Lepidus!
 LEPIDUS: What manner o' thing is your crocodile?
 ANTONY: It is shaped, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth: it is just so high as it is, and moves with its own organs: it lives by that which nourisheth it, and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.
 LEPIDUS: What colour is it of?
 ANTONY: Of its own colour too.
 LEPIDUS: 'Tis a strange serpent.
 ANTONY: 'Tis so. And the tears of it are wet.

[This goes on for a while. Almost exactly at the center of the scene, Shakespeare gets to the point:]

MENAS: Wilt thou be lord of all the world?
 POMPEY: What say'st thou?
 MENAS: Wilt thou be lord of the whole world?
 That's twice.
 POMPEY: How should that be?
 MENAS: But entertain it,
 And though you think me poor, I am the man
 Will give thee all the world.
 POMPEY: Hast thou drunk well?
 MENAS: No, Pompey, I have kept me from the cup.
 Thou art, if thou dar'st be, the earthly Jove:
 Whate'er the ocean pales or sky inclips
 Is thine, if thou wilt have't.
 POMPEY: Show me which way.
 MENAS: These three world-sharers, these competitors,
 Are in thy vessel: let me cut the cable;
 And when we are put off, fall to their throats:
 All then is thine.

- POMPEY: Ah, this thou shouldst have done,
 And not have spoke on't! In me 'tis villainy:
 In thee't had been good service. Thou must know
 'Tis not my profit that does lead mine honour:
 Mine honour, it. Repent that e'er thy tongue
 Hath so betray'd thine act: being done unknown,
 I should have found it afterwards well done;
 But must condemn it now. Desist, and drink.
- MENAS: [Aside.] For this,
 I'll never follow thy pall'd fortunes more.
 Who seeks, and will not take when once 'tis offer'd,
 Shall never find it more.

The scene continues with the disembarkation of the now-unconscious Lepidus, an astonishing group dance, more drinking, and finally, the departure of Antony, Octavian, and their host, and ends with Enobarbus and Menas alone.

Plutarch, Appian, and Dio all end the banquet episode with Sextus' choice that is the most interesting of all: he decides not to choose, or alternatively, chooses not to decide. Shakespeare needs the additional dramatic element of Menas' defection. Like the rational Pericles wearing a magical amulet in desperation at having caught the plague, Sextus changes from a decisive man of action to a sad failure. The power transfers to Menas, and Shakespeare's audience remains engaged. Sextus cannot condone murder, but in Appian and Plutarch's accounts, his scruples come not from honesty or distaste for such a deed, but from the advance knowledge of, and therefore responsibility for, the terrible deed – he wishes Menas had not asked for permission but for forgiveness. He doesn't want to make a choice. Faced with the need to choose, he cannot, and abandons himself – and the Roman Republic – to fate. He is no longer a man of action.

I have been arguing throughout this chapter that fate and choice are the reverse and obverse of the same coin. "Choice" requires action by a subject; "fate" means either real or perceived lack of choice, and Plutarch frequently uses this theme to give us a subtle indication of the trajectory of a life, when action gives way to inertia. Plutarch's own choices have interested me a great deal, particularly his choice to remain a resident of his hometown, Chaeronea. Despite its smallness, Chaeronea was hardly isolated, situated as it was in such a way that it was easily accessible via the Corinthian Gulf to Italy, Macedonia, and hence the Black Sea, as well as Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean, so friends and travelers from all those places would find it easy to visit him. His motivation for staying was public-spirited, that he was concerned "lest it become even smaller" by his defection (*Dem.* 2.2). I have argued that this is a disingenuous statement, and that it is more likely that Plutarch didn't like big cities, Rome in particular. He believed that living in a big city was not necessary for living a virtuous and happy life, and he did not wish to compete in the international arena any more than was unavoidable through his local political work and his friendship with Roman officials like Sosius Senecio, perhaps because of a kind of apprehensive caution that should not be called by as strong a term as fear. Yet his natural diplomacy preferred to accentuate the positive aspect of life in Chaeronea rather than deplore the negative aspects of hyperurban life. This is a revealing choice, regardless of motivation, and it tells us a lot

about Plutarch. He could easily have said that it was not possible for him to leave Chaeronea, and that he was bound by obligation to family, particularly in his role as a priest of Apollo at Delphi. He could have exaggerated the benefits of life in his hometown, singing the praises of the fresh local produce and the talented little theater group. He could have pointed out the negative things about living in a big urban area, problems not very different from now involving crime, noise, heat, and expense. All these things were probably true, at least to a degree. But he didn't do any of those things, instead making it clear that his place of residence was a thoughtfully made decision that benefited all involved. And decisions and choices, thoughtful or otherwise, are colors Plutarch uses to bring his greater picture into focus. So as Plutarch shows us his biographical subjects in action, we do well to extend our antennae whenever *tyche* is involved.

NOTES

- 1 Swain (1989c) 273, citing Brenk (1977) 117; see also Tatum (2010) 448–449.
- 2 See Tatum (2010) 449 n. 2 for a good general discussion and references.
- 3 Plutarch wrote several essays concerning fate and destiny in general, notably *De fortuna*, *De superstitione*, *De fortuna Romanorum*, and the spurious *De fato*. The varied purposes of these essays, often rhetorical, exclude them from our discussion of Plutarch's technique in biography.
- 4 Translations from the Greek are by the author, with the exception of the selections from Plutarch (Pelling (2010) 355–356), Appian (Carter (1996) 282), and Dio (Cary and Foster (1917) 301) on p. 00.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The four 1989 articles of S. Swain are still the best place to start an investigation of Plutarch and fate. Swain (1989d) in particular is fundamental to understanding the discussion, as it in this article that he thoroughly discusses the different meanings of *tyche* for Plutarch, in both the *Moralia* and *Parallel Lives*. J. Tatum (2010) followed up Swain (1989a), examining the particular role of *tyche* in the *Aemilius Paulus–Timoleon* pair, particularly its relationship to *phronesis*. For Plutarch's techniques of characterization and methodology, with particular reference to Shakespeare, Pelling's work is exceptionally useful. Of the eighteen articles collected in *Plutarch and History* (2002), particularly useful are "Plutarch's Adaptation of his Source Material" (91–116), "Aspects of Plutarch's Characterization" (283–300), "*Synkrisis* in Plutarch's Lives" (349–364), and "The Shaping of Coriolanus: Dionysius, Plutarch and Shakespeare" (387–412); see also Titchener (1996), (2005), and (2008) on Plutarch's biographical technique.

CHAPTER 33

The Perils of Ambition

Françoise Frazier

Plutarch, in accordance with Platonic thought, does not equate passion with a simple error of judgment, as do the Stoics. Rather, passion is a psychological reality invested with its own nature, and which reason must come to terms with. To this effect, Plutarch begins his treatise *On Moral Virtue* by remarking that moral virtue “differs mainly from contemplative virtue in that it has emotion for its matter, and reason for its form” (*De virt. mor.* 440D; Babut (1969) 319–333). In the human world, where the soul has to live in a body, there are three general ways of life: theoretical (that of the philosopher), practical (that of the statesman), and chrematistic (that of the businessman); ambition thrives especially in the second (Festugière (1971)). Meanwhile, in the human soul, ambition derives from a “tendency toward action” (*to praktikon*). Plutarch thus shows Lucullus appeasing his ambition (*to philotimon*) with philosophy, “encouraging the contemplative side of his nature (*to theorêtikon*)” (*Luc.* 1.4). More generally, in one of his anti-Epicurean writings (*Non posse* 1107C), Plutarch attributes the taste for knowledge (*to philomathes*) to *theorêtikon*, and ambition (*to philotimon*) to *praktikon*. Whereas in eschatological myths, once the spirit is freed by death, ambition and an inclination toward action can weigh down the soul that is too attached to worldly things, thus leading it to a new incarnation (*De fac.* 945B; *De sera* 565D; see also *Non posse*).

Ambition, being a passion of the soul, a catalyst for action, and a factor in political life, cannot fail to interest Plutarch. He encounters it everywhere: in his life as a public notable and in his works, whether he is writing exhortative treatises like *Precepts of Statecraft* or examining the behavior of the illustrious historical figures in his *Parallel Lives*. Like our modern idea of ambition, the classical notion covers a large spectrum of ethical values. It can refer to a noble desire for “preeminence in the most important of matters” (*De aud. poet.* 35A), the inspiration of worthy actions, or to a frenetic desire to impose one’s authority at any cost, the cause of base demagogy and bitter rivalry. The

Greek language has a semantic field that corresponds to this wide axiological range. It is not smaller and must be addressed first. The vocabulary of ambition is extensive and pertains at once to the life of the city, where it is manifest in inscriptions, as well as to philosophical reflection from which it is possible to elaborate a morality of political action and of relations with others, between colleagues, fellow-citizens, and governed peoples. Plutarch, however, being both a historical biographer and a philosopher, also considers ambition in light of the individual lives he examines. To grasp fully Plutarch's conception of the term, then, we first must elucidate the psychology and ethics of his statesmen. In effect, in the introduction to his *Life of Phocion*, Plutarch remarks that virtuous qualities take on subtle nuances depending on the person who embodies them (*Phoc.* 3.4). This is true also of passions like ambition, whose significance is relative and depends on age and character, as well as on circumstance and the political context of a given historical period. Theoretically, then, one should examine each of Plutarch's subjects. However, for the purpose of the present chapter it will suffice to describe, in general terms, the ethos of the different historical periods Plutarch covers in the *Lives*, and then to consider a few exemplars of ambitious historical figures.

1. The Vocabulary of Ambition: Honorific Inscriptions and Political Morality

In Greek, the morpheme *philo-*, which is found in English and means “to like, desire, or be fond of,” can be associated with a considerable number of other terms, thereby creating words that signify ambition and, at the same time, identify its proper object, that which is desired: *philoprotos* (the desire to be the first), *philarchia* (the desire for power), *philodoxia* (the desire for glory), *philotimia* (the desire for honor). The cognates *philonikia* and *philoneikia* are particularly eloquent of the ambiguity inherent in the notion of ambition. In effect, the original term, *philonikia*, marks an aspiration to victory (*nikê*) characteristic of the ancient Greek world, where competition played such an important role. But victory also implies dispute and rivalry (*neikos*). This second term led to an erroneous spelling that was itself reinforced by the similar pronunciation of *i* and *ei* (Chantraine (1974) s.v. *νίκη*). The term *pleonexia* is similarly ambivalent. Exalted by Callicles and condemned by Socrates in the *Gorgias*, *pleonexia* refers to “the desire to have more than one's due” and can imply a “will to power” or “avarice” depending on whether authority or material wealth is the object of desire.

Philotimia and *philodoxia*, the first being the most important, convey a desire for two key factors of social distinction – honor (*timê*) and reputation (*doxa*), which are associated with noble birth (*eugeneia*) and wealth – and are associated with these in the context of honorific inscriptions frequently occasioned by generous gifts (Panagopoulos (1977) 207–209). In fact, their adjectival forms *philotimos* and *philodoxos* become a sort of honorific title in and of themselves, as in the modern term “honorary member” often bestowed on generous benefactors. Greco-Latin lexicons give the translation *ambitiosus*, *munerarius*, *liberalis*, meaning “ambitious, the sponsor of gladiatorial games, generous” (Robert (1940) 276–280). It is precisely in the context of this “age of ambition,” when euergetism was the primary means of distinguishing oneself and obtaining honors, that we must situate the broader meaning of *philotimia* (Brown (1978) ch. 2; Gauthier (1985)).

The term appears in literary texts of the end of the fifth century BCE. For example, Thucydides uses it to stigmatize the rise of individualism and personal ambition among Pericles' successors (2.65.7), as well as when analyzing the anxieties born of civil war (3.82.8, 8.89.3). Meanwhile, Euripides uses it to portray "the worst of divinities [...] full of injustice" – in opposition to the notion of equality, "which unites friends forever, cities with cities, allies with allies" – in the famous passage of his *Phoenicians* where Jocasta tries to reconcile her sons (532–533, 536–538). In the fourth century, the term *philotimia* can be found in inscriptions where its verbal form is used to describe "one who endeavors to serve [a city], in hopes of receiving honors in return" (Veligianni-Terzi (1997) 26). During Plutarch's time, it could refer equally to an initial inner impulse (the desire for honor), to a motive for action (the quest for honor), and to an action one performs as a point of honor (a noble project, generosity). Eventually, *philotimia* came to signify "the acquisition of honor," at which point it is not that different from the term *timê*, with the exception that the former underscores the eagerness with which a people may bestow honor (Frazier (1988) esp. 126–127).

This leads Plutarch to reflect on the just relationship between a ruler and those he governs. Plutarch addresses this matter in writing to Menemachus, the young aspiring statesman to whom he dedicates his *Precepts of Statecraft*. In this treatise, Plutarch underscores those moments when it is necessary to yield and then grant some "slight and benevolent liberality" to dissipate the malcontent, on the one hand (818D–E), and, on the other hand, to make the people accept a necessary measure and then prevent the statesman from committing errors: "But ambition (*philotimia*), although it is a more pretentious word than 'covetousness' (*philokerdeia*), is no less pernicious in the state; for there is more daring in it; since it is innate, not in slothful and abject spirits (*prohairesesin*), but in the most vigorous and impetuous (*neanikais*), and the surge which comes from the masses, raising it on the crest of the wave and sweeping it along by shouts of praise, often makes it unrestrained and unmanageable" (818A, 820A). Under such circumstances one is likely to forget that "honor should not be payment for the action, but a *symbol*, that it may last for a long time," so that the statesman, bolstered by the people's affection for and confidence in him, may impose his authority and follow the best policy (820E). On the contrary, rulers who seek to unite the people by purchasing their popularity (*doxa*) run the risk of "undermining their authority" and "making the multitude strong and bold" (822A). However, one should no more refuse an innocuous request than "be niggardly (*mikrologêton*) as to the customary public contributions (*philotimémasi*), if [one finds oneself] in prosperous circumstances" (822A). Whereas Plutarch associates noble ambition with greatness, he ascribes the rich man's avarice to small-mindedness. The people, in turn, perceive this as a mark of contempt.

The Greek language offers Plutarch a more nuanced vocabulary than the Latin *ambitio* for emphasizing glory and honors – in other words, the competitive and human context of public action – and it is precisely this emphasis that determines the major themes of political morality found in the *Lives*. These include the problems that arise when two equals espouse conflicting ambitions (*Prae. ger. reip.* 815A, 819C; *Lys.* 23.2) and the problematic relations a ruler may have with the people and public opinion. For instance, in the prologue to his *Phocion–Cato the Younger* pair, Plutarch reflects on the delicate balance between demagoguery and inflexibility, and the fact that it is even more difficult to strike such a balance during times of crisis, as people grow resentful (*Phoc.* 1–2). In the

preface to *Agis and Cleomenes* (1–2) Plutarch gives a subtle analysis of the intoxicating effects popularity (*doxa*) has on the Spartan kings and especially on the Roman magistrates. Despite their laudable intentions, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus in particular ultimately find themselves trapped in an unsustainable cycle of bestowing flattery and being flattered, “kindling an equal ardor (*philotimia*) in themselves toward the people and in the people toward themselves” (*Agis* 2.5). Similarly, Cicero’s *Life* offers an example of how public opinion can render the unwary political figure vulnerable to influence (*Cic.* 32.7). When a statesman desires honors, these become, for the people, a means of flattery that guarantees neither devotion nor loyalty, as was the case for Demetrius Poliorcetes for whom the Athenians “used up and exhausted all the honors (*philotimia*) that could be bestowed upon him” (*Demetr.* 23.2). Thus, the seeking of and bestowing of honors can potentially pervert the human relations so essential to good governance: once all sincerity has gone, the other is merely a means to arrive at selfish ends without any regard for public welfare.

2. Plutarch’s Philosophical Analyses: Personal Morality and Individual Psychology

Ambition is, to be sure, an essential factor in politics. It is both an important catalyst for public service and a dangerous source of discord and demagoguery. However, it is first and foremost a psychological reality, one that necessarily impacts an individual’s ethical behavior. Ambition implies a mastery of desire, or, generally speaking, a psychological makeup which the ancients understood in terms of a certain conception of the soul. This in turn implied a necessary relationship between reason and passion. Accordingly, Plutarch examines his subjects’ ambition from a psychological as well as an ethical perspective.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle notes the relation between the desire for fame (*philodoxia*) and the passion of jealousy (*phthonos*) (*Rhet.* 1387b33 and 1388a1; Frazier (1996) 109–110). Similarly, when Plutarch compares Aristides and Cato the Elder, he remarks that “freedom from ambition (Aristides’ *aphilotimon*) is no slight requisite for the gentleness (*praotés*) that should mark a statesman; and, on the contrary, ambition (Cato’s *philotimia*) is harsh, and the greatest fomenter of envy” (*Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 5.3). Plutarch’s favorable attitude toward *aphilotimos* here attests to the axiological oscillations which Aristotle explains in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: “the man who exceeds in his desires is called ambitious (*philotimos*), the man who falls short unambitious (*aphilotimos*), while the intermediate person has no name. [...] Hence the people who are at the extremes lay claim to the middle place; and we ourselves sometimes call the intermediate person ambitious (*philotimos*) and sometimes unambitious (*aphilotimos*), and sometimes praise the ambitious man (*philotimos*) and sometimes the unambitious (*aphilotimos*)” (*Eth. Nic.* II 7, 1107b27ff.) Thus, the ambitious man is worthy of blame “if he seeks honor more than is right, or from wrong sources,” but in other circumstances he may be lauded as “manly (*andródes*) and a lover of what is noble (*philokalos*)” (*Eth. Nic.* IV 3–4, 1125b11–12). Likewise, the man lacking in ambition, *aphilotimos*, is at fault if he is indifferent to the honors due to good action, but on occasion he is also portrayed as “modest (*metrios*) and temperate (*sôphrôn*)” (IV 4, 1125b13). The notion of *philotimia*, then, is relative.

In practical terms it depends largely on circumstance (*kairos*), whereas in Plutarch's historical biographies it takes on a different meaning depending on its lexical context.

In effect, the goal is to find an equilibrium point between contemplation and a desire for action, as does Brutus, who, having formed his character thanks to culture and philosophy, "stimulated a nature which was sedate and mild to impulses to action (*hormais praktikais*)" (Frazier (1996) 130–132; *Brut.* 1.3). Plutarch refers here to a sudden and unreflective impulse (*hormê*), itself a necessary catalyst for action, but one that should not be confused with ambition. Ambition is illustrated better by the rivalry Caesar provokes between Brutus and Cassius for the praetorship of Rome (*Brut.* 7.2). It can be elicited by an image, which is how the gods sometimes inspire man (*Cor.* 32.6), as well as by *philotimia*, or by the virtuous examples of other men, whose beneficial influence underlies Plutarch's very purpose in writing the *Lives* (*Per.* 2.3). This impulsive desire to distinguish oneself, which is appropriate in young men, lends itself readily to emulation (*zêlos*), as illustrated by the famous example of Themistocles, kept awake by his longing for the trophy of Miltiades (*Them.* 3.4; see Frazier (1996) 132–133 for additional examples).

The impulse *hormê* is also frequently accompanied by *thymos* or *thymoeides*, a warlike or irascible ardor. Timothy Duff associates the two in his study of heroic psychology, although the precise relation between *hormê* and ambition requires further study (Duff (1999a) 83–89). When Plato early on describes the timocratic regime he identifies contention (*philonikiai*) and ambition (*philotimiai*) as its most characteristic traits and attributes them to an excessively belligerent, irascible ardor (*thymoeides*) (*Resp.* VIII, 548c). As for Plutarch, in the passage of his treatise *On Moral Virtue* (425B) where he asserts the impossibility of eliminating passions, he alludes to the practice adopted by lawmakers who "have wisely taken care to excite and encourage in commonwealths and cities the ambition (*philotimia*) and emulation (*zêlos*) of their people amongst one another, and with trumpets, drums, and flutes to whet their anger and courage (*thymoeides*) against their enemies." In so doing, Plutarch establishes a distinction between times of peace and times of war also found in the *Lives* (cf. *Ages.* 8.4). This is because fervor, whether due to ambition or a bellicose nature, is always a possible source of discord. It is truly beneficial only when directed at an enemy, and even then, only if used to implement carefully considered and deliberate actions – as evinced by the disaster visited on Flamininus because of his impetuous determination to confront Hannibal's army (Frazier (1988) 121; (1996) 199–200; *Fab. Max.* 3.1–3).

When guided by reason, ambition safeguards it from inaction and serves as an impetus to greatness, which is particularly useful for young souls. As Plutarch himself remarks: "it would seem that when a young man's ambition is no integral part of his nature (*elaphrôs philotimos*), it is apt to be quenched by an honorable distinction which is attained too early in life; his thirst and fastidious appetite are speedily satisfied. But serious and firm spirits (*embrithê kai bebaia phronêmata*) are stimulated by the honors they receive, and glow brightly, as if roused by a mighty wind to achieve the manifest good. They do not feel that they are receiving a reward for what they have done, but rather that they are giving pledges of what they will do, and they are ashamed to fall behind their reputation instead of surpassing it by their actual exploits" (*Cor.* 4.1). This would explain how Coriolanus becomes, in a sense, his own emulator, competing with himself (*zêlos*) in valor and accumulating countless feats of prowess, spoils, and honors (*Cor.* 4.2).

It would also explain why “success in politics and combat” distracts ambitious souls from such lowly passions and pleasures as love, drink, and festivities, by coaxing them toward greatness (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.7; *Them.* 3.3; *Alex.* 4.8; *Caes.* 58.4–5).

Ambition, however, is of no advantage to the soul incapable of knowing satisfaction. Such is the case with Marius, who was characterized by a mentality similar to that of Coriolanus’ times, with the exception that he belonged to a later period and despised the study of Greek letters, at a time when Greek letters already belonged to the culture of the Roman upper class. However, he remained an old-fashioned Roman and regarded all this with contempt. In the *Lives*, Plutarch does not offer extensive and critical analyses of the worries that plague ambitious souls – as did, for example, his contemporary, Dio Chrysostom, in his treatises *On Reputation* (discourses 66–68) and *On Kingship* (4.127). However, in the conclusion to his *Life of Marius*, Plutarch does give a striking image of his subject’s “most cruel and savage old age,” the cause of which he attributes to “the blasts of passion (*thymos*), ill-timed ambition (*philarchia*), and insatiable greed (*pleonexiai*)” (*Mar.* 2.3) that tormented Marius until his death: “Some, however, say that his ambitious nature (*philotimia*) was completely revealed during his illness by his being swept into a strange delusion. He thought that he had the command in the Mithridatic war, and then, just as he used to do in his actual struggles, he would indulge in all sorts of attitudes and gestures, accompanying them with shrill cries and frequent calls to battle. So fierce and inexorable was the passion for directing that war which had been instilled into him by his envy (*zelotypia*) and lust of power (*philarchia*). And therefore, though he had lived to be seventy years old, and was the first man to be elected consul for the seventh time, and possessed villa and wealth which would have sufficed for many kingdoms at once, he lamented his fortune, in that he was dying before he had satisfied and completed his desires” (*Mar.* 45.11–12). Each word of this last sentence sets the stage for Plutarch’s subsequent allusion to the hope typical of “unmindful and thoughtless persons, who let all that happens to them slip away as time goes on; therefore, since they do not hold or keep anything, they are always empty of blessings, but *full of hopes*, and are looking away towards the future while they neglect the present” (*Mar.* 46.3). However, as these people cannot control the future, their hope makes them slaves to uncertainty. Thus, “they assemble and heap together the external blessings of life before *reason and education* have enabled them to build any foundation and basis for these things, and therefore they cannot satisfy the insatiable appetite of their soul” (*Mar.* 46.4). Ambition has become one of those sicknesses of the soul that Plutarch enumerates in his treatise *On Talkativeness* (502E), the very ambition he denounces in Flamininus, Agesilaus, and Marcellus, all of whom continued to pursue a form of glory ill-suited to their advanced age (*Flam.* 20.1; *Ages.* 36.2–3; *Marc.* 28.3).

3. Ambition in Greek Culture: Sparta, Athens, and the Hellenistic Period

Several factors may impact the nature and degree of an individual’s ambition, such as the political and historical context in which a hero evolves, or the ethos of his city or historical period. Thus, Sparta encouraged the love of honor, *philotimia*, whereas the Hellenistic period was a time of ambitions.

Although Theseus endeavored to emulate Heracles (*Thes.* 6.6), ambition is entirely foreign to mythical kingdoms. It is essential to Sparta, however, where it takes the form of a desire to distinguish oneself for one's city. Plato makes this point when alluding to the Laconian constitution as emblematic of a timocratic society (*Resp.* VIII, 545a). But Plato also acknowledges that such a government, which "mixes the good with the bad," takes great risks. Similarly, in his *Life of Lycurgus*, Plutarch showcases the political and social harmony his eponymous hero seeks to secure his people, then introduces a degree of ambivalence when emphasizing how important *philotimia* is to the education of Spartan children (*Lyc.-Num.* 4.5). We might take, for example, the well-known passage where Plutarch writes of choruses of young girls who "would sing the praises of those who had shown themselves worthy, and so inspire the young men with great ambition and ardor" (*Lyc.* 14.3). These same maidens would partake of manly physical exercise, a practice shunned by other Greeks, so that "they too had a place in the arena of bravery and ambition (*philotimia*)" (*Lyc.* 14.4). Plutarch also underscores that the questions children are asked after dinner teach them to be judicious and to reflect on civic behavior because the slightest hesitation in answering was considered the sign of a soul lacking ambition (*aphilotimos*) (*Lyc.* 18.2). Plutarch ends his portrait of Spartan society by comparing it to a beehive, a society where every form of individualism is spurned and citizens are unconditionally loyal to one another and their king in the interest of the public good: "In a word, [Lycurgus] trained his fellow-citizens to have neither the wish nor the ability to live for themselves; but like bees they were to make themselves always integral parts of the whole community, clustering together about their leader, almost beside themselves with enthusiasm and noble ambition (*philotimia*), and to belong wholly to their country" (*Lyc.* 25.3; see also *Ages.* 18.2, 29.5, and esp. 33.1). Ultimately, even though all of Plutarch's Spartan heroes – Lysander (2.1–2), Agesilaus (2.2), Agis (7.1–2, 14.1), Cleomenes (1.3, 2.2) – are imbued with *philotimia* and appropriately devoted to their city, Lycurgus and Agesilaus in particular show that this passion can also lead to insurmountable rivalries (*Ages.* 15.5 and Frazier (1996) 144). Soon after fighting with Callicratidas, Lysander insults his peers, then all of Sparta, with his arrogant behavior and eventually provokes Agesilaus' retaliation (*Lys.* 6, 19.1). Plutarch subsequently condemns such envy (*phthonos*) between equals because it impedes the accomplishment of noble deeds (*Lys.* 23.2). As for Agesilaus, although he does not succumb to *phthonos*, he does humiliate Lysander, "a benefactor and a friend," because his own "excessive ambition" leads Agesilaus to fear that the ever-popular Lysander will be credited with the success of his own undertakings (*Ages.* 7.3; *Lys.* 23.5). When all is said and done, "it seems to have been due to the same passion that the one would not recognize the authority of his superior, nor the other endure being ignored by his friend and comrade" (*Ages.* 8.4). Later, during a war between Pyrrhus and Sparta, the Lacedaemonian commanders' collective excessive ambition (*philotimia*) causes them to incur unnecessary losses because it incites Pyrrhus to go on the offensive (*Pyrrh.* 30.6). To all appearances, then, the coexistence of noble ambition (*philotimia*) and a destructive sense of rivalry (*philonikia*) forms a dangerous combination. Perhaps inspired by the belief held by natural philosophers such as Empedocles, that discord (*neikos*) is an essential catalyst for keeping the universe in motion, the Spartan lawgiver applied a similar rationale to civic matters. Acting on the conviction that true concord derives from debate and effort, not from complaisance, the Spartan lawgiver exploited his subjects' spirit of ambition and

contention (*Ages.* 5.3). For Plutarch, however, this principle “must not be accepted without some reservations; for excessive rivalries (*philonikiai*) are injurious to states, and productive of great perils” (*Ages.* 5.4).

Plutarch adopts a different stance regarding Classical Athens. Here, ambitions yield to a genuine interest in the city’s well-being, despite the fact that it gave rise to numerous ambitious men as well as to much conflict and rebellion (Stadter (1992) 48–50). Themistocles, perhaps the most ambitious man of all in the *Lives*, offers a case in point (Frazier (1988) 120). To begin with, Plutarch lauds Aristides for aiding Themistocles, who had previously incited the Athenians to ostracize him (*Arist.* 7.1–2). Plutarch then gives an inspired account of the encounter during which these men agree to engage in “a salutary and honorable rivalry (*philonikia*) with one another in emulous struggles” in order to save Athens (*Arist.* 8.2–5). Themistocles, it should be said, earlier had invited Aristides, among others, back from exile so that he could devote himself to serving Athens (*Them.* 11.1), as Pericles had called for Cimon’s return (*Per.* 10.3). Plutarch further remarks on the greater importance given to state interest over personal ambitions in Classical Athens in his *Life of Cimon*: “To such a degree in those days were dissensions based on civil differences of opinion, while personal feelings were moderate, and easily recalled into conformity with the public weal. Even ambition, that master passion, paid deference to the country’s welfare” (*Cim.* 17.6). Regarding Alcibiades, Plutarch emphasizes the noble deeds he accomplished for his country, especially the last request he made of the Athenian generals in hopes of saving them from the disastrous battle at Aegospotami (*Alc.* 36.5). Alcibiades’ request is especially magnanimous because he had just been sentenced to exile, which prompts Plutarch to liken it to Aristides’ selfless generosity toward Themistocles: “[Alcibiades] did precisely what Aristides is so highly praised for doing to Themistocles: he came to the men who were then in command, although they were not his friends, and told them plainly what they ought to do” (*Alc.-Cor.* 2.4). By Demosthenes’ time the orator’s love of honor (*philotimon*) is placed on a par with his love of political liberty (*phileleutheron*) (*Dem.* 3.2), and, in the *Lives* of Phocion and Demetrius, *philotimia* refers to little more than a concrete honor, such as a “victor’s banquet” (*Phoc.* 20.2), the right to sponsor games (*Phoc.* 31.4), or living quarters in the Parthenon (*Demetr.* 23.3).

After Alexander’s death the political scene was dominated by people who yearned for power and were always ready to wage war in order to acquire it. During these times, ambition was more likely to take the form of excessive *philarchia* than *philotimia*, such as the “excessive passion for dominion” Antigonos displays at the battle of Ipsus (*Demetr.* 28.2). The attack Demetrius himself leads at this same battle is, to be sure, *philotimos*, but it is also full of pride (*sobara*) and inopportune (*para kairon*). As a result Demetrius loses what advantages he had won, and is unable to come to his father’s rescue (*Demetr.* 29.3–5). The collective ethos of this period is clearly marked by *pleonexia*, which ineluctably pits neighbor against neighbor and prompts Plutarch to recall once again Empedocles’ discordant cosmology: “But just as among the elements of the universe, according to Empedocles, hate produces mutual dissension and war, particularly among those elements which touch or lie near one another, so the continuous wars which the successors of Alexander waged against one another were aggravated and more inflamed in some cases by the close proximity of interests and territories” (*Demetr.* 5.1). In effect, Demetrius and Pyrrhus become bitter rivals

because their “greed for power, the natural disease of dynasties, made them formidable and suspicious neighbors” (*Pyrrh.* 7.2). In such an atmosphere even treaties occasion new demands: “for how can men, to whose rapacity (*pleonexia*) neither sea nor mountain nor uninhabitable desert set a limit, men to whose inordinate desires the boundaries which separate Europe and Asia put no stop, remain content with what they have and do one another no wrong when they are in close touch, it is impossible to say” (*Pyrrh.* 12.2–3). When envy and intrigue dictate men’s actions, “war and peace are nothing more than words,” used to further personal interests; justice and friendship signify nothing more than a brief pause between injustices (*Pyrrh.* 12.3). When the desire to rule is reduced to a desire to possess the title of king, a man obsessed with conquest will commit injustices that ineluctably corrupt the governance of his own people. Plutarch evokes on no fewer than four occasions the harmful effects of Demetrius’ royal ambitions and arrogance as ruler: when he and his father, Antigonus, become the first kings of Athens (10.3, 18), when Demetrius was proclaimed “commander in chief of the Greeks” (*hegémôn*) at the reinstatement of the League of Corinth (25.3–6), and finally, when Plutarch gives an overall picture of his reign (41–42). Plutarch goes into considerable detail when describing his hero’s theatrical behavior (*tragôdian*, 41.4; cf. 18.3) and gives a scathing account of how perverse royal authority had become under Demetrius. Following the example of Zeus, royal authority should be synonymous with justice; however, Hellenistic kings were anything but just. This much is evident in the unflattering epithets (in Plutarch’s opinion) attached to their names, which were nevertheless a source of pride for the men so named – for example, Demetrius Poliorcetes, or “The Besieger” – which Plutarch contrasts with Aristides’ moniker, “The Just” (*Arist.* 6.1–2). Plutarch’s condemnation is final: “Thus a power devoid of wisdom advances evil to the place of good, and makes injustice a co-dweller with fame” (*Arist.* 42.6). It is not long before such a king is abandoned by his subjects. The Macedonians join forces with Pyrrhus, who is able to harmonize military valor and mildness (*Demetr.* 44.5), leaving Demetrius to flee to Cassandreia (45.1) before embarking on “the path of hope, as upon a royal highway” for the last time (46.1). Traces of a theme emerge here not unrelated to the “pathological ambition” analyzed in the previous pages, and which is embodied most fully by Pyrrhus. When he is being admired by the Macedonians, Pyrrhus is no less the victim of a “savage and ferocious” – not to say inhuman – “rapacity” (*pleonexia*), as evinced by the response he gives to one of his sons, curious as to who should inherit his kingdom. Pyrrhus promises it to “that one of you who keeps his sword the sharpest” (*Pyrrh.* 9.2). When relating his hero’s every endeavor, Plutarch calls attention to how Pyrrhus is spurred on constantly, from the heart of Greece to Italy, from Sparta to Argos, by mad hope and the inability to control his ambitions (*Pyrrh.* 6.1, 14.8, 22.1, 23.3, 26.1, 26.3, 26.7). From chapter 22 on through to Pyrrhus’ final campaign, these endeavors multiply with increasing speed: “Pyrrhus was away *entertaining one hope after another*, and since he made one success but the starting point for a new one, while he was determined to make good each disaster by a fresh undertaking, he suffered neither defeat nor victory to put a *limit* [a major theme of this period] to his troubling himself and troubling others” (*Pyrrh.* 30.2). Marius, whose *Life* is paired with that of Pyrrhus, is also tormented by ambition throughout his entire life, though somewhat differently (Duff (1999a) 101–130).

4. The Theme of Ambition in Roman History: The Conquest of Greece and the Civil Wars

Plutarch addresses the period of Rome's conquest of Greece in the paired lives of Philopoemen and Flamininus, in which ambition plays an important role (Swain (1988) 343–347). Neither man is entirely immune to the negative effects of ambition. Philopoemen is more soldier than statesman (*Phil.* 3.1) and, when Flamininus retires from the battlefield where *philotimia* served him well, his unrelenting pursuit of Hannibal – already defeated and in exile – belies an unfortunate lack of judgment (*Flam.* 20.1). Plutarch, however, focuses on how these men behaved toward Greeks, juxtaposing, for instance, the Roman's treatment of them with the conflicts that had pitted Greek peoples against each other for so long (*Flam.* 11.3–4). Plutarch laments the Greeks' rivalry among themselves elsewhere (*Tim.* 29.2–3; *De Pyth. or.* 401C–D), as did Plato (*Resp.* V, 469e–470a), and then curiously ends his final comparison of his heroes by awarding “to the Greek the crown for military experience and generalship, and to the Roman that for justice and goodness of heart” (*Phil.-Flam.* 3.3; see Walsh (1992) 221–226; Pelling (2002a) 350–353). The theme of ambition, thus, leads to the larger and more heated question of Roman domination and to a Plutarchan conception of relations between Greeks and Romans. The discord that marks the end of the Roman Republic brings us back to familiar territory: the matter of ambition. Historians generally date the beginning of the Republic's disintegration to the crisis that marked the era of the Gracchi. However, as we saw earlier, their ambition was not initially driven by a quest for personal power. Rather, their actions were prompted above all by a desire to restore to health a society that had been seriously undermined by greed. Only later did the Gracchi succumb to political ambition.¹ After the Gracchi, however, personal ambition assumed enormous proportions and Plutarch is at his harshest when discussing Sulla's rule. Sertorius, whose patriotism and strength of character Plutarch underscores, is an exception. Whereas the Greek kings' desire for power effectively furthered their arrogance, Roman statesmen hid behind demagoguery. Generals from these times were unable to climb the ranks through merit and imposed their authority thanks only to their armies. Leaving aside the simplicity and discipline traditionally characteristic of Roman militia, these generals bought their soldiers “with lavish sums to be spent on luxurious living, [and] unwittingly made their whole country a thing for sale, and themselves slaves of the basest men for the sake of ruling over the better. This was what drove out Marius, and then brought him back again against Sulla; this made Cinna the assassin of Octavius, and Fimbria of Flaccus” (*Sull.* 12.8). Sulla was the first to adopt such corrupt practices “by making lavish expenditures upon the soldiers under his own command so that he might corrupt and win over those whom others commanded” (*Sull.* 12.9). Ultimately, both his never-ending conflicts with Marius – who was no less obsessed by power – and the destructive First Triumvirate derive from Sulla's corrupt ways (*Pomp.* 47.1–3; *Caes.* 13.2–3). As for Pompey, his inordinate ambition pits him against Sulla (14.2), Metellius (29.3), and Lucullus (30.6, 31.4), the last of whom served as a model for his own demagoguery in winning the people's favor (*Pomp.* 38.1–2). And, although he and Caesar are initially on good terms, once Crassus dies the two men turn on each other in a struggle for power that eventually leads to civil war (*Pomp.* 53.6). Crassus was himself a victim of his own

ambition. It is ambition that made him a rival of Pompey and Caesar (*Crass.* 6.4, 7.1–2, 12.2; *Caes.* 14.4) – even though it inspires no hatred or ill will between them (*Crass.* 7.5) – and prompted him to embark on a disastrous attempt to conquer Parthia. In effect, the outrageous zeal with which Crassus threw himself into this campaign led to his undoing and made him “an example of foolish ambition” (*Crass.* 16.1–2, 27.4). As for Antony, whose agreement with Octavius and Lepidus was at the cost of much bloodshed (*Ant.* 19.3), he ultimately adopted an anti-Roman (*misorrhômaios*: 54.3) attitude resembling the arrogance characteristic of Greek kings when he joined forces with Cleopatra. Antony’s death, however, was not lacking in dignity. Unlike Marius, he died a happy man “since he had become most illustrious of men, had won greatest power, and now had been not ignobly conquered, a Roman by a Roman” (*Ant.* 77.4). It is worth noting that this scene is indicative of the pleasure Plutarch takes in valorizing the positive moments of his subjects’ lives, even when these unfold amidst the throes of civil war. Antony’s death also conveys the “greatness” characteristic of Plutarch’s heroes.

5. Exemplars of Ambition: Alexander and Caesar as “Great Natures”

Greatness, like the passion of ambition with which it is often associated, comes with a certain degree of risk and ambiguity. Plutarch speaks to this nuanced image of greatness in the preface of his *Life of Cimon* when he acknowledges the impossibility of finding a perfect human being (2.4), and again, toward the beginning of his *Life of Demetrius*, when he appropriates Plato’s notion of “great natures” (*Resp.* VI, 491e), that is to say, those men who “exhibit great vice also, as well as great virtues” (1.7; Duff (1999b) 313–332). In this same passage Plutarch evokes another Platonic truth to explain why he relates “the blameworthy and the bad” alongside “better lives”: if we are to know the good, we must also know the bad. In the case of Demetrius and Antony, their extraordinary qualities as military leaders and their tendency to indulge in pleasure excessively during times of peace respectively convey the degree of their natural potential for both good and bad (*Demetr.* 2.3, 19.6). When examining the lives of these men, Plutarch draws a connection between the irregularities of their behavior and the vicissitudes of their careers, but he does not place much importance on their education. For instance, although the remarkable indulgence with which Antigonus raises his son, Demetrius, may have some bearing on the future king’s character, Plutarch places more emphasis on his subject’s natural affection for his family, a rare trait among Greek kings who were known to kill sons, wives, or fathers in order to secure and preserve their place on the throne (*Demetr.* 3). Plato, however, stigmatizes the effects of a “bad education” and, within the context of the *Republic*, the passage to which Plutarch alludes above serves to explain the negative influence sophists and sycophants could have on an otherwise gifted youth, who, as it happens, bears a striking resemblance to Alcibiades. Plutarch does in fact evoke the effects of a bad education, but in regard to Alcibiades’ Roman counterpart, Coriolanus, who “bore witness for those who hold that a generous and noble nature, if it lacks discipline, is apt to produce much that is worthless along with its better fruits, like a rich soil deprived of the husbandman’s culture” (*Cor.* 1.2; Pelling (2002a) 344–346). As for Alcibiades, Plutarch makes another agrarian comparison to describe

the force with which he was drawn “toward both good and evil” in the *Life of Nicias*: “the soil of Egypt, it is said, by reason of its very excellence, produces alike ‘drugs of which many are good, intermixed, but many are deadly.’” (9.1; Hom. *Od.* 4.230). The analysis Plutarch gives in his *Life of Alcibiades* is of course more nuanced. Here, ambition is closely tied to the hero’s irregular behavior from the outset, as evinced by the following proleptic remark: “His character, in later life, displayed many inconsistencies and marked changes, as was natural amid his vast undertakings and varied fortunes. He was naturally a man of many strong passions, the mightiest of which were the love of rivalry (*philonikon*) and the love of preeminence (*philopróton*)” (*Alc.* 2.1). Plutarch illustrates Alcibiades’ ambition with a series of anecdotes taken from his childhood, then turns to the important matter of his hero’s amorous pursuits. Following Plato in the *Republic*, Plutarch juxtaposes the influence sycophantic *erastai* (lovers) have on Alcibiades with that of Socrates: while the former play on Alcibiades’ desire for honor (*philotimia*) and love of glory (*philodoxia*) in order to push him into the political sphere prematurely, Socrates holds Alcibiades back from politics and directs his ambition toward accomplishing “beautiful actions” (*Alc.* 6.3, 7.3). Plutarch gives a similar interpretation regarding the prize Alcibiades is awarded at Potidaea, alluding in this case to Plato’s *Symposium* (220d–e). Once the young Alcibiades enters the political sphere, he escapes the attention of no one and his *philotimia* can be seen in the splendor of his horses that come in first, second, and third place in the chariot race at Olympia, in the public choruses he offered the people, in his munificence, as well as in his regrettable eccentricities. All of this attests to “the unevenness of his nature” (16.6), an otherwise serious flaw, but one which Plutarch interprets as a voluntary show of flexibility, as Alcibiades endeavors to adapt to the different places where he is sent into exile (*Alc.* 23; Frazier (1996) 86–89). At the same time, this inconsistency befits “great natures” and we see a similar trait in the young Themistocles (*Them.* 2.5), as in Plutarch’s treatise *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance*, when he explains the delays of divine justice in terms of the hope that the guilty party may amend his character: “Great natures, indeed, produce nothing small. Because of the intensity of their impulses, what is strong and efficient in them does not remain idle; but they are tossed to and fro as on an ocean before attaining a fixed and established character.” However, like the good farmer confronted with the “many things annoying and blameworthy” produced by great natures, “the better judge, discerning from these very tokens the excellence and nobleness that lie beneath them, awaits maturity as the coadjutor of reason and virtue, and the period when the nature once so wild shall yield fruit that is not wild” (*De sera* 552C). It is tempting to juxtapose with these images a passage from the treatise *On the Sublime* (II 2), which also addresses greatness: “Greatness, abandoned to itself, without knowledge, deprived of stability and ballast, courts the greatest dangers, in allowing itself to be carried solely by its own movement, under the sway of ignorant audacity.” Although here it is a question of style rather than character, for Plutarch the one can be revealing of the other (*Ant.* 2.5). Consequently, not only does the similarity of these passages suggest that the concept of greatness is widely received, it also explains what of the sublime the “greatness” of Plutarch’s heroes partakes in.

There is no better illustration of this “greatness” – and its fragility – than Alexander and Caesar, two “giants” whose conquests gave rise to the Hellenistic world and the Roman Empire. Tradition has transmitted nuanced images of both men which can be interpreted in terms of the men’s character, thereby illustrating the advantages and

dangers of ambition (Duff (1999a) 85–87). The more illustrious representations of Alexander present him as an avatar of the philosophical ideal of cosmopolitanism, effectively making him the hero of civilization. Plutarch exploits fully this image in his treatises *On the Fortune or Virtue of Alexander*, in which ambition plays but a small role. The darker image of Alexander, in part the product of Stoic philosophers, emphasizes the debauching and barbarizing effects power had on him. Similarly, Caesar, who emulates Alexander, is portrayed by some as the ambitious saboteur of the Republic, and by others as its “first Caesar” (*Caes.* 11.5–6; Pelling (2002b) and (2009)). Both men are irresistibly drawn to greatness and find in their accomplishments, as well as in their good fortune, a constant source of inspiration for their ambition and designs. For Alexander, “Fortune, by yielding to his endeavors, confirmed his resolution, and the high spirit (*thymoeides*) which transported him in his undertakings rendered his desire for conquest (*philonikon*) invincible, so that ultimately it subdued not only enemies, but even times and places” (*Alex.* 26.14). Whereas, for Caesar, his “many successes, however, did not divert his natural spirit for enterprise and ambition to the enjoyment of what he had laboriously achieved, but served to fuel and incite future achievements, and begat in him plans for greater deeds and a passion for fresh glory, as though he had used up what he already had” (*Caes.* 58.4). This last passage offers an extreme version of the analysis Plutarch gives of Marius, with the exception that Caesar is so great that he himself is his only worthy rival. All of the major themes associated with ambition converge in these examples: the idea that it requires self-mastery, as well as the dangers that stem from power, arrogance, and the seductive influence of sycophants. This enables us to give a general idea of the evolution of Alexander’s passionate character. In his initial portrait of the Macedonian king, Plutarch closely links prudence with ambition. The first protects Alexander from corporeal pleasures despite his “fiery temperament,” and the second “kept his spirit serious and lofty in advance of his years” (4.8). From that moment on Alexander “preferred to receive from [his father] a realm which afforded, not wealth nor luxury and enjoyment, but struggles and wars and ambitions (*philotimiai*)” (5.6). Faced with the unyielding and rebellious nature of his son, who nonetheless “was easily led by reasoning into the path of duty,” Alexander’s father, Philip, decides to entrust him to Aristotle (7.1–2). The first of Alexander’s ambitions which Plutarch mentions is to “excel in [the] acquaintance with the best things [rather] than in power” (7.7). Alexander writes this in a letter to Aristotle wherein he accuses his teacher of having undermined his ambition by making the knowledge he desires available to many. Later, however, Alexander’s *philotimia* is overcome by his *thymos*. While the first (Alexander’s desire for honor) may have inspired his generosity (39.1), it is not excessive to the point of leading him to believe he is a god (28). The second (Alexander’s irascible ardor) shines on the battlefield (58.2), but he never masters it entirely (Duff (1999a) 85–86). The erratic quality of Alexander’s *thymos* is evident in his first campaign against the Greeks, during which he exerts a ferocious repression against the Thebans, yet treats the Athenians with clemency, “whether his rage was now sated, as a lion’s might be, or whether he wished to offset a deed of the most sullen savagery with one that was merciful” (13.2). Alexander is moved by a similar impulse at the burning of Susa, where he is spurred on by his companions’ *philotimia* (38.5 and 38.8), and again, even more so, when he kills Cleitus (51.6–52). As Anaxarchus urges Alexander on, the latter becomes intoxicated with power, to the extent that he would impose obeisance (45.1, 54.3), and becomes excessively severe. In effect,

Alexander, who values his honor more than his life (42.2), is enraged by insulting rumors and exasperated by conspiracies and the slightest reticence in advancing his campaign (57.2, 62.3, 71.3). Each of Alexander's passions exacerbates the others – his grief at Hephæstion's death (72), his hatred of Antipater and Cassander (74), his superstitious fears (73, 75) – without ever detracting from his greatness. The complex historical context of Caesar's life offers an apposite pendant to the Macedonian king's psychological complexity (Pelling (1997)). Once Caesar eliminates Pompey as a rival, he wields the power he acquired as a tyrant with the clemency of a good ruler (*Caes.* 57.3–5). If Caesar's desire to be king contributes to his downfall (60.1), so too do his friends' excesses (57.2–3) and the systematic distortion of his decisions by those who envy him (59.3). This moral ambiguity culminates in the scene of Caesar's death. To be sure, the conspirators act in the name of liberty, but their violence creates an atmosphere of unease and Caesar falls with dignity, even before he is vindicated by the “the great guardian-genius of the man, whose help he had enjoyed through life” (69.2), and the signs that indicate his assassination “was not pleasing to the gods” (*Caes.* 69.5; Frazier (2010)).

Ambition, specifically “the desire to distinguish oneself,” is essential to portraying the character of great men as they grapple with their times. Being at the heart of a complex nexus of individual and political themes – passion, reason, and education; contemplation and intense action; emulation and envy; civic-mindedness and base selfishness; demagoguery and arrogance – the ambitions of illustrious men elucidate their behavior as well as the ethos of the period in which they live. Moreover, ambition is essential to the very human greatness, a mixture of the sublime and human frailty, that has enabled Plutarch's heroes to inhabit the imagination and works of great modern authors.

NOTE

- 1 On Plutarch's distinction between social equilibrium, compromises made by the rich, and a political hierarchy threatened by the populace, see Frazier (1998) 61–68.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The theme of ambition, of considerable importance in Plutarch’s works, is addressed in general studies by A.E. Wardman ((1974) esp. 115–124) and T.E. Duff (1999a). The latter gives a detailed analysis of the *Lives* of Pyrrhus–Marius, Lysander–Sulla, and Coriolanus–Alcibiades. Françoise Frazier provides linguistic and historical background concerning *philotimia* in her 1988 article.

CHAPTER 34

Sex, Eroticism, and Politics

Jeffrey Beneker

Plutarch sees sexual behaviour as a manifestation of a man's character. For the tyrant or the violent man, sex is an arena for power and the domination of others. Theseus, Demetrius, Sulla, and subsidiary figures like Alexander of Pherae or [the Spartan king] Pausanias express and reveal their viciousness through sexual violence. The ideal statesman instead shows his self-control in the same arena, creating harmony in his household and in his city.

So Philip Stadter (1995) concludes his survey of male sexual behavior in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, marking both ends of the behavioral spectrum. Stadter shows in the course of his survey that Plutarch describes certain types of both problematic and positive behavior in order to reveal the character of his biographical subjects, or of other figures in the *Lives*. Examples of problematic behavior fall into the categories of irrational excess, unseasonable lust (i.e. when a man past the age for marrying engages in a marital or sexual relationship), and sexual violence. Stadter also identifies three categories of positive behavior, although only one, rational self-control, is really a behavior. The other two, harmonious relationships and a stimulus to virtue, are really the result of a controlled response to sexual impulses. Self-control, in fact, is the central issue in the representation of sexual behavior in the *Lives*: irrational excess is one of Stadter's categories of problematic behavior, but this excess may also be seen as the reason behind unseasonable lust and violence, just as the practice of rational self-control leads to important positive benefits for the one who achieves it and for those around him. In the simplest terms, then, the sexual behavior of the ideal statesman is characterized by self-control, while the behavior of the tyrannical or violent man is characterized by the opposite.

Plutarch's biographical subjects exhibit a fair amount of complexity, however, even as they conform to certain types of behavior. While particular incidents may be categorized as tyrannical or ideal, the men themselves are often not so easy to classify. For example,

Stadter's examples of irrational excess, Demetrius and Antony, both regularly engage in excessive sexual behavior, and yet they exhibit positive, even sympathetic, qualities as well. "Plutarch castigates Demetrius for his licentiousness and violence," Stadter writes, "but finds a redeeming feature in his ability to put aside pleasure when military duties called." And even though Antony, in contrast to Demetrius, cannot abandon his lover, Cleopatra, when duty calls, Plutarch nonetheless concludes the biography by representing the pair as "bonded together" in a truly loving relationship, thus softening his condemnation of Antony's lack of self-restraint (Stadter (1995) 235–236; see also Pelling (1988) 18–26). At the other end of the spectrum, Alexander the Great provides "perhaps the clearest example" of rational self-control, but even he consents to kiss his *eromenos* Bagoas late in his life, in the midst of a celebration marked by excessive drinking and a general lack of discipline (Stadter (1995) 228–229; for the context of the kiss, see Mossman (1988) 90 = (1995) 223; Beck (2007)). Episodes of sexual excess or restraint, while easily characterized in isolation, must also be interpreted within their larger narrative contexts.

Plutarch's *Lives*, then, are populated with figures whose sexual behavior, taken as a whole, generally falls along the scale between the polar types represented by the tyrant and the ideal statesman. These figures exhibit similar variety and complexity in other sorts of private behavior, as well as in their public actions as military leaders and statesmen. Their private lives and their public conduct are, in fact, closely intertwined, and Plutarch really has no interest in narrating their sexual activity unless it explains, or at least helps to explain, the motivation for a political or military action (see Walcot (1998); Duff (1999) 94–97). When we consider episodes of sexual behavior in light of Plutarch's biographical method, therefore, we find that Plutarch includes them in the *Parallel Lives* as part of his larger project to reveal the character of individual statesmen in an analytical way; that is, not only to describe a statesman's role in history but also to reveal how he came to play that role. An essential element in Plutarch's characterization is the notion that the ideal statesman is self-controlled in his response to sexual impulses and in other sorts of private behavior, in his dealing with family members and friends, and most importantly, in his role as civic or military leader.

Plutarch, therefore, uses episodes of sexual behavior in two ways. First, he may narrate an episode as a means of indicating that a man possesses or lacks self-control, using private behavior to foreshadow or to explain public behavior that is similarly excessive or restrained. Second, he may represent the consequences of a private action as having direct bearing on the course of public affairs. In what follows, I first examine the internal processes that allow Plutarch's heroes to gain self-control, and I explore how these processes may influence a person's external actions. Then I turn to the *Agesilaus–Pompey* as a case study for how Plutarch depicts the struggle involved in achieving self-control and how this struggle can affect a man's life in a practical, as opposed to a strictly theoretical, manner.

1. Eroticism, Politics, and Self-Control

Sexual self-control in the *Parallel Lives* may be considered an expression of what the Greeks in general called *sophrosyne* or *enkrateia*. For Plutarch, self-control at its most basic level is gained through a struggle against one's bodily appetites, which include hunger, thirst, and in the case of sexual impulses, erotic desire (*eros*). This struggle takes

place within the soul, but it also has real implications for a person's external actions: implicit in the character portraits of the *Lives* is the assumption that a man who is unable to control his appetites is also unlikely to manage his household, lead a city, or command an army with any success. In examining private behavior in order to predict or explain public actions, Plutarch follows a tradition that goes back to Classical Athens. In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, for instance, Socrates asks, "If we were at war and wished to select a man who most certainly would keep us safe and defeat our enemies, would we select someone whom we perceived to be dominated by food or drink or sex or toil or sleep?" (1.5.1). Socrates expects his interlocutors to answer in the negative; Plutarch holds essentially the same view. (On the attitudes of Classical Athens, see Davidson (1997) 250–308; on the influence of Classical literature on Plutarch's political thought, see Aalders (1982) 61–65; Roskam (2009) 17–22.)

Platonic and Aristotelian notions of ethics provide the basis for Plutarch's approach to self-control. The best treatment of the philosophical ideas behind the ethics of Plutarch's *Lives* is found in Duff (1999) 72–98, on whom I rely for the following discussion. As a Platonist, Plutarch was well acquainted with the tripartite model of the human soul, which consists of one rational element and two irrational elements. These irrational elements represent the appetitive aspect of human nature (i.e. the bodily appetites mentioned above) but also the spirited aspect, which manifests itself in emotional responses, such as anger or courage. In thinking about ethics, however, Plutarch preferred the simpler bipartite model set forth by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. This model divides the soul into what Plutarch refers to as reason (the rational element) and the passions (the irrational element). Although strictly speaking Aristotle excludes the appetites from the irrational part of the soul, Plutarch conceives of the irrational portion of the bipartite soul as comprised of both the spirited and the appetitive components of Plato's original tripartite model. (See further Fortenbaugh (1975) 35; on Plutarch's adaptation of Aristotelian philosophy, see Dillon (1977) 193–198; Opsomer (1994) 33–36; Beneker (2012) 9–17.) This conception allows him to speak in general of a struggle between reason and the passions, and to include among the passions both spirit (*thymos*) and appetitive desire (*epithymia*).

The soul of a Plutarchan hero, then, is the site of a conflict between reason and the passions, but it is also the place where reason may tame the passions, making them cooperative and even supportive of one's "reasoned plans" (*logismoi*). This taming is accomplished through habituation, a process whereby a man's education and general ethical conduct are designed and executed specifically so that the reason may gain control over the passions and, over time, guide them into a state where they cooperate as a matter of course. Such a cooperative state is considered virtuous, and thus this process of habituation is central to Plutarch's conception of ethical virtue. For the most part, Plutarch conceives of this process as one where the reason habituates the spirited element (*thymos*) into a state of moderation, according to the Aristotelian idea of virtue as a mean between extremes of behavior. An obedient, moderated spirit, in turn, allows a man to be courageous without being rash, for example, or to convert the spur of anger into a measured, rational response when he is attacked by political enemies or on the battlefield.

We find an illustrative, though negative, example of this process in the *Pelopidas*. Although this fourth-century Theban general was an outstanding military commander, he ignored a philosophical education in his youth, unlike his colleague Epaminondas.

“Both were equally gifted by nature with respect to every virtue,” Plutarch writes, “except that Pelopidas took greater pleasure in exercise, while Epaminondas preferred learning, and so the one spent his leisure in the wrestling schools and hunting, and the other listened to lessons of philosophers” (*Pel.* 4.1). The difference in their training becomes evident later in their careers, when their political enemies attack the two men with slander and lawsuits: Epaminondas is able to withstand the attacks with equanimity because of his virtuous disposition, while Pelopidas is unable to restrain his spirited nature, and so he lashes out in anger (25). In the climactic scene of the *Life*, Pelopidas spies his enemy at the outset of a major battle, and then “he did not hold his anger back with a reasoned plan, but having been enflamed by the sight and handing over his body and the command of the battle to his *thymos*, he sprang forth and was carried well ahead of his men” (32). This rash action leads directly to the death of Pelopidas, a fine general who nonetheless dies recklessly on the battlefield because in his youth he had not trained his *thymos* to obey his reason. In terms of biographical technique, Plutarch has explained Pelopidas’ rashness by marking the deficiency in his education, and he has foreshadowed his loss of rational control in the final battle by narrating his immoderately angry response to the attacks of his political opponents at an earlier moment in his life. (On the habituation of the *thymos*, see Plutarch’s essay *On the Control of Anger* 459b–460c; for further discussion of the *Pelopidas*, see Beneker (2012) 58–102.)

Control over bodily appetites, including erotic desire, is also important to Plutarch’s system of ethical virtue. In the essay *On Moral Virtue*, where Plutarch writes about the range of possible responses to these appetites, he gives technical definitions for the two best responses: *sophrosyne*, he explains, is a virtuous mean between a lack of sensation (*anaesthesia*) and unrestrained licentiousness (*akolasia*); and *enkrateia* is self-control in response to an appetite but without a virtuous mean having been achieved (445b–446d). With *enkrateia*, a battle is fought and won each time an appetite arises; with *sophrosyne*, however, a man habitually responds to appetitive desire with moderation, without struggle, and without indulging an appetite beyond what is required to satisfy the needs of the body. Here Plutarch is clearly following Aristotle, who cites food, drink, and sexual intercourse as examples of bodily pleasures that a *sophron* man engages in moderately, and who was the first Greek philosopher to make a rigorous distinction between *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia* (North (1966) 203). Plutarch, therefore, connects control over bodily appetites, including erotic desire, to ethical virtue. This allows him to assume that a man who lacks either *sophrosyne* or *enkrateia* would almost certainly be unable to moderate or control his passions in general. And since Plutarch’s biographical method depends on the interrelationship between private virtue and public actions, this aspect of his heroes’ character comprises an essential part of how he explains the course of their lives. In this way, Plutarch’s exploration of his heroes’ sex lives serves as a means for his evaluation of their general psychological well-being, for exposing their character, and ultimately for demonstrating (at least in part) why they succeed or fail as politicians and military leaders.

Although Plutarch follows Aristotle in providing technical definitions for *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia* in his essay on ethical virtue, in general he uses the terms less formally when narrating particular instances of self-control in the *Lives*. He retains the same basic meanings, but he relaxes the rigid distinction between them, considering both essentially virtuous. In some cases, he even uses the terms as virtual synonyms. In describing Spartan marriage customs, for example, he explains that the practice of the husband visiting his

wife's bed secretly in the middle of the night brought about several benefits for the couple, among them the fact that they both "exercised their *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*," improving their character by making themselves more self-controlled (*Lyc.* 15.10). Similarly, he speaks of Alexander relying on both "*sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*" in order to resist beautiful captive women (*Alex.* 20.11). In the case of Marcus Coriolanus, when Plutarch names some of the hero's perceived virtues, he includes *enkrateia* on the list, along with justice (*dikaiosyne*) and courage (*andreia*), leaving out *sophrosyne* altogether (*Cor.* 1.4). Plutarch employs both terms, then, to refer to self-control in response to a bodily appetite, and his narratives take for granted that a man's ability to exercise either *sophrosyne* or *enkrateia* makes a positive statement about his character.

In addition to describing or conjecturing a period of habituation that leads to self-control, Plutarch may also assume that self-control is a natural part of a man's character, acquired and practiced without a period of habituation, but this characterization is more rare. An important example is Alexander the Great. In one of the introductory chapters to his *Life*, Plutarch declares that "while he was still a boy, Alexander's *sophrosyne* was made evident in that, even though he was impetuous and eager with regard to most things, he was unmoved by pleasures of the body and approached such things as these with great *praotes*" (*Alex.* 4.8). As Hubert Martin writes, Plutarch generally considered *praotes* to be "a thing learned, not a spontaneous or natural reaction" (Martin (1960) 71; see also Duff (1999) 77). In reporting that Alexander possessed *sophrosyne* while "still a boy," however, he deemphasizes habituation and education, even denying them a role in Alexander's character development. Instead, he gives the impression that Alexander was *sophron* by nature. There are, in fact, no examples of Alexander practicing self-restraint prior to his being declared *praotes* with respect to somatic appetites, and his philosophical education under Aristotle lies in the future. Plutarch's Alexander, an extraordinary historical figure in a wide variety of ways, serves as a model of rational self-control, but not as an example of how a more ordinary man might attain that virtue. (See further Beneker (2012) 195–206.)

Even more frequently, Plutarch does not apply labels at all when he narrates examples of sexual behavior, preferring to let his readers evaluate actions for themselves, and then to draw conclusions about character and to anticipate the course of future events. In the case of Julius Caesar, Plutarch makes a positive statement about Caesar's ability to respond moderately to erotic desire by declining to narrate the tales of his sexual exploits that were well known in the ancient world, as evidenced, for example, by Suetonius' biography. Although he clearly knows at least a few of these tales and even relates them in the *Lives* of other men (e.g. *Cat. Min.* 24; *Brut.* 5), in the *Caesar* itself he is content to pass over them in silence, preferring to depict his hero as eager for political power and unable to be distracted by *eros* or any other pleasure. Even the famous affair with Cleopatra, which Plutarch cannot ignore, is greatly abbreviated and plays an insignificant role in the *Life*: it pointedly does not motivate Caesar's war in Alexandria, as it does for other authors (e.g. the historian Dio Cassius and the poet Lucan); and Plutarch declines to narrate Caesar's dalliance with the queen while in Egypt or her subsequent visit to Rome. Caesar's self-control is made evident by the narrative itself, but Plutarch does not directly name this aspect of his character. The words *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia* do not appear in the *Life*, even though Caesar is perhaps the most self-controlled of Plutarch's heroes.

Plutarch's depiction of Caesar as fully self-controlled reveals an aspect of his character that is critical to his success and, as part of a complex of characteristics, allows him to dominate

the government of Rome. In addition to his ability to avoid erotic entanglements, Caesar, for example, is an outstanding orator, can endure extreme physical hardship, pursues political and military objectives relentlessly, and even seems to be favored by the divine will. The absence of erotic entanglements is one element to Plutarch's full characterization of the sort of single-minded ambition that could drive a man to challenge the Roman political establishment and to overthrow the Republic (Beneker (2002/2003); Pelling (2006)).

Plutarch similarly characterizes Mark Antony by exploring the degree to which he exercises self-control, though Antony serves as a negative example. The narrative of the *Antony* contains many examples of how he lacked control over his own affairs: as a youth, Curio and Clodius lead him into a dissolute lifestyle (*Ant.* 2); later, his wife Fulvia trains him "to obey women" (10); and eventually *eros* for Cleopatra comes to dominate him (25). When Plutarch begins to narrate the battle of Actium, the turning point in Antony's war with Octavian and a pivotal episode in the *Life*, he continues to characterize Antony as lacking self-determination, naturally attributing his fatal decision to fight at sea to his desire to please Cleopatra, even calling him "an appendage" of the woman (62). And when Antony abandons the battle altogether in order to pursue his fleeing lover, Plutarch declares that he evidently "was controlled not by the reason of a general, nor of a man," but was dominated by erotic desire (66). Thus Plutarch narrates Antony's failure at Actium as a lack of self-control, a predictable outcome, given the pattern established in his youth, but also a pointed lesson about the influence of private behavior on public affairs. If Caesar's ability to avoid erotic entanglement helps to establish him as the sort of man who could become sole ruler at Rome, Antony's lack of self-control demonstrates that he is the sort of man who could not. In this way, Plutarch uses the question of self-control both to explain a particular historical event and to create a more general impression of Antony's character and qualifications as a statesman.

In the next section, I turn to a close study of the *Agesilaus–Pompey*, which provides a practical example of how Plutarch represents the struggle to maintain self-control in response to erotic desire, and how that personal, internal struggle can affect the external actions and career of a statesman.

2. The Politics of *Eros* in the *Agesilaus–Pompey*

In the *Agesilaus*, the anecdote involving Megabates, the son of a Persian commander whom Agesilaus meets in Asia Minor, is especially useful for demonstrating the influence of self-control on a man's public actions. Plutarch in general relies on Xenophon's *Hellenica* and *Agesilaus* as sources for his biography (see Hamilton (1994); Shipley (1997) 48–51), and in particular he has adapted the story of Megabates from Xenophon's encomium of the Spartan king (Xen. *Ages.* 5.4–6). The narrative element of Xenophon's original version concerns Megabates' attempt to greet Agesilaus with a kiss, according to the Persian custom. This gesture of respect presents a challenge to the Spartan king, however, because he feels an erotic attraction for the boy. After an internal struggle against his desire for physical contact, he refuses the kiss. Megabates, in turn, is offended and no longer attempts the greeting, which prompts Agesilaus to ask one of the boy's companions to convince him to try again. But when the companion asks him whether he would accept the kiss on a second attempt, Agesilaus declares with an oath that he would

rather do battle again with his desire, and so to resist the kiss, than to have the greatest wealth or be the greatest man (5.5).

The narrative framework is simple, and by addressing the reader directly and encouraging him to conclude that Agesilaus is a praiseworthy model of self-control, Xenophon adds a moral that is equally simple. He introduces the story with this rhetorical question: "Concerning his sexual relations, isn't his *enkrateia* worth recalling, if for no other reason than because it's amazing?" (5.4). After describing Agesilaus' fierce resistance to his erotic desire for Megabates ("he struggled against himself with all his might"), Xenophon prompts the reader with another leading question: "Isn't this a wonderful example of *sophrosyne*?" (5.4). And he concludes with an interpretive dictum: "I am not ignorant of how some people see these matters; for myself, however, I know that many more men are able to get the better of their enemies than of desires such as Agesilaus felt" (5.6). Thus there is no doubt about how Xenophon expects his reader to interpret the anecdote and, in turn, to understand Agesilaus' character.

Such an unwaveringly positive interpretation is by no means out of place in an encomium, but it would be less effective in a biographical text that aspires to an analytical presentation of character. Plutarch, therefore, takes over the main outline of the story from Xenophon, but he changes details and adds interpretations that cast Agesilaus' actions in a more ambiguous light (Plut. *Ages.* 11.6–10). As Mark Beck explains, Plutarch reworks the anecdote so as "to represent the amplitude of Agesilaus' emotional involvement with Megabates" and to depict a "tentative vacillating quality" in the Spartan king (Beck (1999) 181–184). That is to say, rather than describe a paragon of self-control who heroically subdues his passion, Plutarch emphasizes that Agesilaus was teetering on the brink of erotic indulgence. Beck describes the subtle adjustments that Plutarch makes to the details of the narrative. For example, he leaves out the fact that the kiss is a regular Persian custom; he describes Agesilaus as struggling against his desire by relying on his "competitive nature" (*to philonikon*) rather than virtuous *sophrosyne* or *enkrateia*; he adds that Agesilaus' friends reproached him for avoiding the kiss out of fear; and he omits the king's firm oath in declaring that he would resist the kiss a second time. The most significant modification, however, is to be found in the tone of the narratorial interventions. Plutarch includes no praise for the king's self-control while relating the anecdote, and his final dictum creates almost the opposite impression from Xenophon's. Plutarch concludes the anecdote by stating that once Megabates had gone away, Agesilaus "was so enflamed with desire that it is difficult to say whether he would have been able to avoid the kiss if the boy had appeared again" (11.10). Plutarch, therefore, has chosen to represent the outcome of the struggle as less certain and to set before the reader an Agesilaus who is less ideally virtuous.

Plutarch's version of the anecdote depicts the Spartan king as weaker than he is in Xenophon's version, but it also shows a man who is perhaps more realistic. The ideal of *sophrosyne*, acquired through habituation and allowing for a consistently moderate response to appetitive desires, is certainly easier to describe than to attain. The form of self-control that Plutarch defines technically as *enkrateia*, although it demands constant vigilance and internal struggle, might come closer to the reality of self-control for most of his biographical subjects, and perhaps for his readers as well. Moreover, Agesilaus' decision not to attempt the kiss a second time is prudent: unable to resist his *eros* for the boy and yet unwilling to submit to passion, Agesilaus avoids the object of his desire altogether. If in reality a virtuous moderation is difficult for a man to achieve, and if the struggle to maintain self-control is tenuous, then avoidance of temptation appears to be a safe and even a commendable alternative.

In fact, in choosing to evade Megabates' kiss, Agesilaus acts like Cyrus the Great as he is depicted, and admired, by Xenophon in the *Cyropaedia*. This is a connection that Plutarch himself notices elsewhere. In his essay *How to Study Poetry*, he discusses the need for a man to understand the power of the passions and then to deny them the opportunity to arise; by way of example, he writes that "Agesilaus did not allow himself to be kissed by the handsome boy when he greeted him, and Cyrus did not dare to look upon Panthea" (31c). (On the Panthea story in the *Cyropaedia*, see Stadter (1991) 480–484; Due (2003) 585–588; for its influence in Plutarch's works, see Beneker (2012) 113–127.) In another essay, Plutarch praises even the *sophron* Alexander for refusing to gaze upon a beautiful woman, again holding up Cyrus as the model of prudent behavior:

And so Cyrus did not wish to look upon Panthea, but when [his friend] Araspas was telling him that the woman's beauty was worth seeing, he said, "For just that reason I should avoid her, for if I am persuaded by you and approach her, perhaps she herself will convince me to come again, when I can't spare the time, to gaze upon her and sit with her, forgoing many things that require my attention." In the same way, Alexander did not come to see the wife of Darius, who was said to be most remarkable [for her beauty]; although he visited her aged mother, he did not allow himself to see the young and beautiful woman. (*On Curiosity* 521f–522a)

Cyrus here speaks frankly about the difficulty of maintaining one's self-control, making essentially the same choice as Plutarch's Agesilaus, and giving us a glimpse of the rationale that may have lain behind that choice: Agesilaus might also have feared that he would be distracted from his duties as Spartan king if he had allowed himself to indulge in an affair with Megabates. If Plutarch's Agesilaus can be classed with Cyrus and Alexander, then his practical decision to avoid Megabates should perhaps be read as no less wonderful than the *sophrosyne* depicted in Xenophon's encomium.

But there may be another dimension to Agesilaus' choice, one that takes into account appearances and not only actions. In Xenophon's version of the anecdote, Agesilaus seems to be virtuous simply for the sake of virtue: his resistance to the kiss is a natural consequence of his *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*. Plutarch, however, writes that Agesilaus was relying on *to philonikon* to resist his desire for Megabates, and by this he means his "competitive nature" or "desire for victory." In this way, Plutarch employs a military metaphor to describe the struggle (Shipley (1997) 175–176), but he also implies that the struggle has both an internal and an external component. As Beck points out, concepts such as *philonikia* most often pertain to the public sphere of a man's life (Beck (1999) 182 n. 47). In choosing to emphasize Agesilaus' competitive nature, Plutarch seems to be acknowledging the interconnection between Agesilaus' private life and his public career, and he represents Agesilaus as aware of this interconnection as well.

Other interpreters of this anecdote have also emphasized the public dimension to Agesilaus' actions. One argues that by accepting the kiss, Agesilaus would have left himself vulnerable to criticism for improperly gratifying his erotic desire (Shipley (1997) 176–177). Another suggests that Megabates' father may have been attempting to establish a political connection with Agesilaus by encouraging a relationship between the Spartan king and his son, and that Agesilaus, wary of these political implications, therefore shuns Megabates (Hindley (2004) 127). Even without determining what particular sort of trouble Agesilaus was hoping to avoid, we may still recognize the larger, public context for his actions: if

Agesilaus had indulged his passions and granted the kiss, his lack of self-control would have been evident for others to see. Significantly, this anecdote falls during a period of the *Life* when the Spartan Lysander is openly challenging Agesilaus' authority, and so his resistance has real implications for his political standing. In other words, Plutarch's Agesilaus is not self-controlled for the sake of virtue alone, but he seems to have avoided Megabates in order to avoid being distracted from his responsibilities as king, and so that his display of self-control would serve as an assertion of his authority.

In assessing the impact of Plutarch's version of the anecdote, Beck rightly turns to the second half of the *Agesilaus–Pompey* pair, comparing the interaction of Agesilaus with Megabates to Pompey's affair with the courtesan Flora. In the opening to the second *Life*, Plutarch includes the story of how Pompey turned Flora over to his friend Geminus, who had also become attracted to her, even though Pompey himself "appeared to feel *eros* for Flora" (*Pomp.* 2.6–8). As he narrates Pompey's cool detachment, Plutarch creates the impression that he is in complete control of his erotic desire, and so at the outset of the *Life*, he marks the Roman hero as different from the Greek in this regard (Beck (1999) 185). But Plutarch also relates a second anecdote, which follows immediately on the first, about Pompey's relationship to the wife of one of his freedmen. This anecdote reinforces the impression of Pompey as self-controlled, but it also foretells of less virtuous behavior in the future. The freedman's wife was famously beautiful, and so Pompey kept her at arm's length, so as to avoid the impression that she had conquered him with her beauty (2.9). Like Agesilaus, he is aware of the external, political implications of self-control. Even so, there is a dark cloud on Pompey's horizon, which casts a shadow over the image of a completely self-controlled man. After relating the story of the freedman's wife, Plutarch adds an ominous remark: "So Pompey was very cautious and guarded concerning such matters, but he did not escape the reproach of his enemies in this regard, for concerning his own wives, he was criticized for ignoring public affairs in order to keep them happy" (2.10). Despite his admirable behavior, Plutarch warns the reader, Pompey will eventually allow his private life to interfere with his public duties.

The reproach comes in the second half of the *Life*, later in Pompey's career, when he is contending with Julius Caesar for supremacy in the Roman state. In the first half, however, Plutarch develops the image of Pompey as a rising statesman and, as a component of that image, continues to describe him as self-controlled in his sexual behavior. For instance, while Pompey is leading an army in pursuit of Mithridates, he shows great restraint in dealing with captive women, being "intimate with none of them" but restoring them all to their parents and homes (36.3–9). And when he takes the stronghold of Caenum, he discovers "licentious" (*akolastoi*) letters that had been exchanged between Mithridates and one of his lovers (37.3). By relating details such as these, Plutarch marks Pompey's statesman-like behavior by contrasting it with the licentiousness of his enemy, whom he will eventually defeat (Beneker (2005a) and (2005b)). As promised, however, Pompey will not maintain his resistance. At about the middle of the biography, Plutarch declares that his career has reached its zenith. Here he begins to narrate Pompey's confrontation with Caesar, and he makes clear to the reader that from this point forward, Pompey is conducting a losing campaign for control of Rome. And Plutarch indicates Pompey's declining political fortune by narrating a corresponding decline in his conduct with respect to the women in his life.

This decline, however, has a particular characterization. Pompey does not simply indulge in sexual relations to excess. Rather, he neglects to consider the external consequences of

his private behavior. The first of Pompey's wives during this phase of the *Life* is Julia, Caesar's daughter. In narrating their relationship, Plutarch is careful to indicate both his erotic attachment to his young wife and the distraction that this attachment causes:

Quickly, however, even Pompey himself was made docile by *eros* for the girl, and he turned most of his attention toward her and spent his days with her in the countryside and in gardens. He neglected his duties in the forum, so that even Clodius, who was tribune at that time, had contempt for him and undertook the most daring deeds. (48.8)

A few chapters later, Plutarch adds that Pompey declines to govern his pro-consular provinces in person so that he can remain in Italy, a decision he makes because of his erotic attachment to Julia (53.1–2). Plutarch does not criticize Pompey for the fact that he feels *eros* for his wife; indeed, he generally saw erotic relations between husband and wife as beneficial (see Nikolaidis (1997) 47–51; Goessler (1999) 106–107; Beneker (2012) 7–57). Instead, he emphasizes how Pompey's desire for his wife affects his responsibilities as a political leader. If I am correct in suggesting that Agesilaus resisted his *eros* for Megabates primarily to maintain focus on his duties and to assert his authority as king, then the Megabates anecdote provides an important point of reference for the presentation of Pompey's marriage to Julia. Neither story emphasizes self-control as a virtue important for its own sake. Instead, they both demonstrate the public implications of private behavior. The lesson Plutarch draws in the passage quoted above could not be clearer: although he may have been involved in an admirable erotic relationship, Pompey nonetheless allowed himself to be distracted from his public responsibility at a critical moment in his career and in the history of the Roman Republic.

When Plutarch comes to narrating Pompey's relationship to another wife, Cornelia, he gives even greater emphasis to the political and the historical implications of private behavior:

Those who were more insightful thought that Pompey had overlooked the plight of the city while it was in difficult circumstances. They had selected him as its physician for these circumstances and had turned it over to him alone, but he was putting on garlands and celebrating his marriage, while he ought to have considered the consulship itself to have been troubling, since it would not have been granted to him in such an illegal way if the city had been flourishing. (55.4–5)

As Plutarch reports the criticism of the “more insightful” (*hoi kompsoteroi*), he seems to concur and to invite the reader to share in this opinion. (See Duff (1999) 120, on how Plutarch often shares the opinions of bystanders in his texts.) Once again, he is not critical of the marriage *per se*. In the case of both Julia and Cornelia, he describes the wives as worthy companions. Julia possessed such great devotion (*to philandron*) for her husband that even Romans displeased by Pompey's political alliance with Caesar “did not reproach his *eros* for his wife” (53.4). Cornelia, too, has many attributes that make her an excellent wife: she is well educated in letters, music, geometry, and philosophy; her character is free of unpleasant meddling; and she comes from an excellent family (55.2–3). Plutarch is clear enough that the fault he finds in these marriages has to do primarily with Pompey's choice to indulge his erotic desire to the detriment of his public career.

When Stadter identified three categories of problematic sexual behavior narrated in the *Lives*, he named irrational excess and unseasonable lust as two of them. I suggested

above that both of these categories were really instances of a single behavior, the lack of self-control. In considering the second phase of the *Pompey*, however, it is indeed useful to distinguish unseasonable lust from generic sexual excess, for Plutarch has shaped his narrative of both marriages so that Pompey is charged with conducting himself in a manner unsuitable to his stage in life. When he describes the mutual *eros* in the union of Pompey and Julia, for instance, Plutarch remarks that Pompey ruled his provinces through legates while he spent his time with his wife “in the resorts” of Italy. Literally, these “resorts” are *hebeteria*, or “places for young men.” Further, he says that Julia desired Pompey “despite his age” and that he would “let down his guard” around women, so that his company was pleasant (53.1–2). The implication is once again clear. Pompey was mature and was serving the state in a time of crisis, and yet he was cavorting with Julia as if he were a young bridegroom, without projecting the dignity of an elder statesman or acknowledging the true weight of his responsibilities. In the case of Cornelia, Plutarch is more exact, showing that Pompey was acting as though he were a member of the younger generation. “Some people were displeased,” he writes, “because the marriage was arranged for people incompatible in age; for Cornelia was better suited in age to marry Pompey’s son” (55.4). This statement immediately precedes the criticism of the “more insightful,” who felt that Pompey was not giving sufficient attention to Rome’s dire political situation. In this *Life*, Plutarch asserts the problem of unseasonable lust quite directly.

We may say, then, that the lust exhibited by Pompey is not excessive or violent, but imprudent. He might have struggled to restrain his *eros*, allotting only the minimum amount of time to his marriages, and devoting himself almost entirely to the forum. He has instead failed to balance properly the demands of the public and private spheres, and his experience in turn encourages the reader to reflect back to the first *Life* and to understand the problems that Agesilaus thus avoided by resisting Megabates. Pompey’s ultimate defeat was, of course, brought about by a host of factors, and the full process cannot be explained simply by erotic attraction for his wives, however unseasonable. Plutarch includes, in fact, many more historical and personal details in the course of narrating Pompey’s decline and eventual defeat. Nonetheless, the rather small episodes of Pompey’s indulgence of his wives and Agesilaus’ struggle not to kiss Megabates are critical components in the larger narratives of these *Lives*. They help to elucidate the character of the two men and to demonstrate that, in Plutarch’s view, the intersection of eroticism and politics could have a significant impact on historical events.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For discussion of Classical thought about the intersection of eroticism and politics, see Davidson (1997), Ludwig (2002), and Wohl (2002). For general studies of *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia* in Greek literature, see North (1966) and Rademaker (2005). For discussion of the erotic dimension to the behavior of Plutarch's heroes, see Martin (1984), Stadter (1995), Beck (2007), and Beneker (2012). On Plutarch's political thought in general, see Aalders (1982) and Pelling (2004). Duff (1999) is the most thorough examination of the psychology behind Plutarch's understanding of human behavior; see especially his chapter entitled "The Soul of a Plutarchan Hero." On the general connection between education and the development of character, see Pelling (1990), Swain (1990), Gill (2006) 412–421, and Duff (2008).

In addition to the works cited above, studies of the erotic elements in particular *Lives* include Henry (1995), González Almenara (2001), and Beneker (2007), on Pericles and Aspasia; and Opsomer (2007), on Brutus and Porcia. On Plutarch's attitude toward sex in general, see Walcot (1998). On Plutarch's essay *On Moral Virtue*, see Babut (1969) and Becchi (1990). On the essay *Dialogue on Love* (also called *Amatorius* and *Eroticus*), see Foucault (1986), Frazier (2005), and Opsomer (2007).

CHAPTER 35

Philanthropy, Dignity, and Euergetism

Geert Roskam

1. *Luce Clariora*: Clear-Cut Distinctions and Definite Ideals

Reading Plutarch's *Lives* means entering a fascinating world. It means exploring an impressive panorama of famous heroes and extraordinary achievements from a glorious past. Plutarch deals at length with both the greatest triumphs and the most crushing defeats of the Greeks and the Romans. The heyday of Salamis and the loss of Greek freedom at Chaeronea, the *dies ater* of Cannae and Flamininus' Isthmian Declaration are only a few of the many great moments in the history of the ancient Mediterranean world that are discussed in the *Lives*. But even more than an account of these major events, the *Lives* tell the story of many famous figures, of their brilliant virtues and deplorable shortcomings, of their ambitions, successes, and failures, of their continuous struggles against adverse circumstances, against each other, and even against themselves. A fascinating world indeed.

And yet, *si parva licet componere magnis*, I would like to begin this contribution by focusing on a measly provincial town in the second century CE, that is, the Chaeronea where Plutarch was born. At that moment, the great days of Marathon and Salamis definitively belonged to the past and the local politicians only had to manage fairly moderate administrative tasks, while the real power was with Rome. That was the political situation in which Plutarch was living, and it is not unlikely that this historical background influenced Plutarch's perspective while writing his *Lives*.¹

To the extent that Plutarch's own political ideals are indeed relevant for a full understanding of the *Lives*, it makes sense to turn briefly to his political works. Especially in his *Political Precepts*, Plutarch elaborates at length his view of the correct political course in a local contemporary *polis*. This, of course, is not the place to discuss Plutarch's political ideals in detail.² Here it suffices to note that Plutarch's political philosophy is fundamentally

Platonic: the politician should aim at an “honorable” ideal (*to kalon*) (Roskam (2004/5)), which basically consists in educating his fellow-citizens to virtue. The good politician should act as a moral physician, curing the wickedness of his people. Politics, in short, should be *Seelenheilung*.

Such a political project, however, entails a difficult problem: the people should be willing to submit themselves to the politician’s moral therapy, and this, actually, is by no means self-evident. Plutarch’s general view of the people is particularly negative (Said (2005)): it is a capricious beast (*Political Precepts* 800C) that is usually anything but prepared to pursue such honorable purposes. This obviously makes the politician’s high philosophical project difficult to realize. In order to win the people’s confidence and good will, which will give him the power he needs to realize his noble ideal,³ he has two important means at his disposal: his personal virtue (800B–801C) and his persuasive rhetoric (801C–804C).

All this sounds philosophically high-minded and commendable, to be sure, but it also has crucial consequences for the politician’s more concrete conduct, one of which is that the politician should not try to gain fame and influence among his people by organizing festivals and spectacles or by distributing money. Plutarch repeatedly underlines that this would indeed be a wrong strategy, because such practices usually corrupt the people (821 F–822A; cf. 802DE) and only yield an ephemeral and insecure honor (821 F) which has nothing dignified in it (*entimon de mēden mēde semnon echousan*; 823E). This position, however, principled though it may be, entails a difficult problem: how should the politician deal with the established custom of euergetism, which was in Plutarch’s day the driving force of political life? Many public decisions could only be taken through the financial support of rich citizens, who were in turn recompensed by their people with an honorary decree or statue.⁴ Such a practice could be questioned on moral grounds, perhaps, but its abolishment would undoubtedly bring about the collapse of the whole political system. Plutarch, who realized this very well, never suggested such a radical solution but instead tried to reorient the system toward a philosophical purpose (Trapp (2004); Roskam (2007) 138–139), thereby distinguishing between the duties of the rich politician and the appropriate behavior of his poor colleague. A rich politician should voluntarily participate in the euergetic system but take care that his donations always serve an honorable (*to kalon*) or necessary (*to anagkaion*) purpose, or at least pleasures that are harmless (822A–C). The poor politician, on the other hand, should follow a different course. He should emulate those who try to lead the city by virtue and reason, for this is both an honorable and dignified approach (*to kalon kai to semnon*), which could moreover charm and attract the people (822 F–823A). Such a virtuous politician, indeed, need not live in an ivory tower, far away from the less educated crowd:

The good man is not selfish (*authadēs*) or offensive (*epachthēs*), nor the temperate man self-satisfied, nor does he “stalk by with looks that hurt the citizens.” No; he is affable and equally approachable and accessible to all, he keeps open house as a refuge for all who need him, he displays his caring nature (*to kēdemonikon*) and humanity (*philanthrōpon*) not only in practical services but in sympathy with the griefs and successes of others. He never makes himself offensive or overbearing by taking a crowd of servants to the baths, or by appropriating special seats at the theatre; nor does he mark himself out by invidious exhibitions of luxury and extravagance. On the contrary, in clothes, in life-style, in the education of his children and the care of his wife, he is just like everyone else; it is as though he wants to share

the society and common humanity of the masses (*homodēmein kai sunanthrōpein tois pollois boulomenos*). Furthermore, he offers himself as a friendly counsellor, an unpaid advocate, and a kindly reconciler of wife to husband or friend to friend. (823AB, trans. D.A. Russell)

This famous passage has often been regarded as Plutarch's ideal image of the true politician.⁵ It should not, however, be isolated from its context, since it has a well-defined place and function within Plutarch's discussion of the problem of euergetism, and as such omits other important aspects of political life (such as offices, foreign relations, and so on). Moreover, the passage combines the eloquent expression of a high ideal with a pragmatic spirit, in that it considers honorable virtue and kind *philanthrōpia* mainly as interesting means to gain the people's favor. In short, the passage may throw light on an important aspect of Plutarch's political convictions, to be sure, but should not be interpreted as an absolute and comprehensive ideal.

One may further note the pedagogical character of Plutarch's discussion of euergetism in the *Political Precepts*. His schematic distinction between the rich and the poor politician makes it fairly easy for the reader to decide on his own political course. A quick evaluation of his own financial means suffices to know what is for him the right way to act. On the other hand, this convenient dichotomy is somewhat blurred by a more fundamental tension between *semmotēs* and *philanthrōpia*. The dignified character of the politician's behavior so often receives attention in the *Political Precepts* (801D, 803A, 811B and C, 813C, 820C, 823A and E) that we may in all likelihood regard it as one of the important features of Plutarch's ideal. What Plutarch here wants to make clear, however, is that such dignified behavior has nothing to do with outward ostentation. It is, rather, inextricably connected with virtue and *to kalon*, and is as such also within the reach of poor politicians. At the same time, *semmotēs* should be sharply distinguished from self-conceited pride (*ogkos*) and haughtiness,⁶ for this crucial passage most interestingly shows that dignified conduct can be reconciled perfectly with *philanthrōpia*. It is this subtle amalgam of dignified affability and solemn kindness that may be regarded as Plutarch's ideal and as such goes beyond the somewhat superficial opposition between poor and rich.

2. *Historia Magistra Vitae: The Lives*

It is high time now to leave the narrow perspective of the Greek *polis* during the second century CE and enter the wide world of history. Plutarch's *Political Precepts* have provided us with several interesting concepts and problems that are important in his *Lives* as well. The radical dichotomy between extremely rich politicians (such as Crassus or Lucullus) and particularly poor ones (such as Aristides or Phocion) there returns and is completed by different kinds of intermediate levels. Different euergetic practices and their results are discussed, and the fundamental tension between *semmotēs* and *philanthrōpia* often receives attention. A general study of this topic in the *Lives*, then, and more particularly a detailed discussion of it in a couple of them, can throw an interesting light on the relation between Plutarch's own political and philosophical ideals and his work as a biographer. Did Plutarch try to apply the standards of his *Political Precepts* while writing the *Lives*?⁷ And if history is indeed life's teacher (after Cicero's famous expression in *On the Orator* 2.36), which lessons might Plutarch derive from it?

Panem et Circenses: *The Importance of Money in Politics*

In the *Lives* there are many examples of famous statesmen who gained or enhanced their political power by means of euergetic practices such as the organization of festivals and banquets or the distribution of money and land. Caesar, for instance, knew perfectly well how to use his wealth in order to further his ambitions (*Caes.* 4.5, 5.8–9, 17.1, 57.8). Alcibiades was no less lavish in the expenditure of his abundant wealth. He actually entered political life by making a contribution of money (*Alc.* 10.1), and Plutarch repeatedly underlines that Alcibiades' voluntary expenditures and munificence toward the city were one of the important elements on which his great influence was based, in that they made the Athenian people tolerant of his eccentric luxuriousness and effeminacy (10.3 and 16.4). The young king Agis of Sparta proposed a cancelation of debts and a redistribution of land and was the first to put into the common stock his own estates and the fabulous amount of six hundred talents (*Agis* 9.5), thus making a deep impression on his people (10.1). Later, king Cleomenes would successfully follow Agis' honorable example (*Cleom.* 11.1).

All these examples (which can easily be multiplied) demonstrate that such euergetic practices were an important and often successful means to gain reputation and popularity among the multitude. In the case of Agis and Cleomenes, this means was obviously in line with honorable philosophical ideals, to be sure, but it was no less open to overambitious nouveaux riches and unscrupulous arrivistes. Euergetism, then, should never be devoid of moral principles. In a celebrated passage of the *Life of Pericles*, Plutarch deals with the matter from a more general, theoretical point of view:

The life of a speculative philosopher is not the same thing, I think, as that of a statesman. The one exercises his intellect without the aid of instruments and independent of external matters for noble ends; whereas the other, inasmuch as he brings his superior excellence into close contact with the common needs of mankind, must sometimes find wealth not merely one of the necessities of life (*tôn anagkaïôn*), but also one of its noble things (*tôn kalôn*), as was actually the case with Pericles, who gave aid to many poor men. (*Per.* 16.7, trans. B. Perrin)

This view is clearly in line with the one developed in the *Political Precepts*. Plutarch does not ignore the importance of money in politics,⁸ but is convinced that the rich politician should make use of his wealth. On the other hand, the above passage from the *Life of Pericles* does not so much focus on the relevance that the politician's spending has for his own career – that is, for the preservation of his good reputation – as on its importance for the life of his poor fellow-citizens. The emphasis indeed falls on the statesman's assistance of needy citizens as part and parcel of an honorable political project. To the extent that the politician uses his wealth for this purpose – which Pericles apparently did – this wealth belongs to the domain of *ta kala*.⁹ A few case studies may further illustrate both this ideal and its limitations.

* * *

An interesting example of the politician's honorable use of money can be found in the *Life of Cimon*. Cimon did *not* rise to power through all kinds of lavish donations. His great reputation was to an important extent based on his brilliant military accomplishments (5.4 and 8.2), and was enhanced by the support of Aristides (5.6). His discovery of Theseus' bones

(8.5–7) and his famous decision in one of the tragic contests (8.7–9) further added to his influence. It is only at a later moment, that is, when he was already powerful and popular, that Cimon began to spend the money he acquired during his military campaigns for the benefit of his fellow-citizens. In that sense, he used his wealth as a means to *maintain* his reputation rather than *acquire* it. Furthermore, Plutarch explicitly approves of Cimon's decision by observing that the statesman spent the revenues he won honorably (*kalōs*) from the enemy even more honorably (*kallion*) on his fellow-citizens (10.1). This evaluation obviously recalls the above-mentioned passage from the *Life of Pericles*. Once again, Plutarch indeed appreciates a rich politician's attempt to help his needy fellow-citizens. Such an honorable course apparently combines concern for what is useful with an attitude of sincere solicitude and humanity (*philanthrōpia*) (cf. Roskam (2009) 73–76). That Cimon achieved this ideal is shown by the free dinners he provided for many Athenians (10.1–2; *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 1.5–6), by the fine clothes he gave to the needy (10.2), and by his distributions of money (10.3). He also offered the money to fill in the marshes and build the foundations of the long walls, and beautified the city with many elegant public resorts (13.6–7).

All this suggests that Cimon can be regarded as a classic example of a rich politician who spent his wealth for an honorable purpose. Yet this *Life* also questions the clear-cut dichotomy between the alternative courses of the rich and the poor politician as they were elaborated in the *Political Precepts*. Cimon indeed possesses many qualities that the poor politician should especially pursue. Except for a few shortcomings, his character was generally noble and just (5.1), and he was never bribed (10.8), nor should his great expenditures be understood as a kind of demagoguery. On the contrary, his general policy was aristocratic and Laconian (10.8), and it was rather when Cimon was absent from Athens that the people got beyond control (15.2; cf. also 19.3). In that sense, it is no longer surprising that even Cimon's custom of offering new clothes to badly dressed elder citizens is evaluated as dignified behavior (*semnon*) rather than as base flattering of the mob (10.3).

Moreover, Cimon's aristocratic dignity did not preclude kind affability. From the very beginning of his career, he was reputed among the people for his mildness (*praotēs*) and simplicity (5.5). Later, by taking away the fences from his fields, he gave everybody the opportunity to take the fruits of his lands (10.1 and 10.7), thus even surpassing the ancient hospitality and humanity (*philanthrōpian*) of the Athenians (10.6). It is clear, then, that Cimon reached in his political career, and particularly in his public donations, an ideal and honorable combination of *semnotēs* and *philanthrōpia* and thus fully met the high standards that are elaborated in the *Political Precepts*. Yet, strikingly enough, even this was no guarantee for political success, for Cimon was ostracized for ten years (17.3). Did he, in spite of his obvious *philanthrōpia* and his great generosity toward his fellow-citizens, in the end prove too much of an aristocratic nature (as is suggested in the *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 2.6–7)? A careful reading of the *Lives* seldom yields clear and easy answers.

* * *

In Crassus' career, lavish donations likewise played an important part. He used his fabulous wealth (*Crass.* 2.3 and 2.5–7) in order to give dinners and grain for many ordinary citizens (2.3, 3.2, 12.3), and even lent financial assistance to his rivals (7.6). Furthermore, just like Cimon, Crassus combined his contributions with a remarkable kindness and affability. His house was open to all (3.1), and he willingly and carefully acted as an advocate for all who needed him, even in trivial lawsuits and when other brilliant speakers

such as Pompey, Caesar, or Cicero refused to plead (3.4 and 7.2). The humane (*philanthrōpon*) and unaffected way in which he greeted people further added to his popularity, as he had no need of *nomenclatores* but could address even the most obscure Romans by their name (3.5). In short, he was always friendly and ready to benefit his fellow-citizens (7.4). Once again, this strategy proved particularly successful, since Crassus became very popular among the people (3.4–5). Plutarch adds that Crassus acquired an influence and repute equal to that which Pompey gained from his many great military campaigns (7.2). And since Pompey was far less accessible and willing to help others, Crassus by his *philanthrōpia* even prevailed over Pompey's dignified behavior (*semnotēs*), which was colored by pompous magnificence (*ogkos*) (7.3–4). All this strikingly illustrates how efficient kindness and affability can be as a means to gain political influence.

Prima facie, Crassus thus appears to reach the same ideal combination of generous euergetism and kind *philanthrōpia* as Cimon. Yet, for several reasons, Crassus is inferior to Cimon and may in some respects even be considered as a negative example. First of all, Crassus will in the long run pay for his lack of other (i.e. military) talents: a successful career can never be built on rich donations and friendliness alone. In that respect, it is hardly surprising that Crassus achieved nothing as a consul except for the one thing he used to do: making a great sacrifice and feasting the people (12.3).¹⁰ Crassus' censorship was even less important (13.1–2), and his military expedition against the Parthians was a great mistake (17.8; but cf. *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 4.4). Euergetism devoid of political or military competences, then, proves to be largely insufficient, and it is telling that Crassus later needs Pompey's support against the angry crowd (16.4–5).

Second, in the formal *Comparison of Nicias and Crassus*, Plutarch explicitly argues that Crassus spent his money uselessly (*achrēstōs*) (1.4). This may at first sight come as a surprise: did Crassus not spend so much money on sacrifices to the gods and on food for his poor fellow-citizens? And did Plutarch himself not recommend the use of religious ceremonies as an honorable pretext for rich donations (*Political Precepts* 822B)? This would suggest that Crassus' euergetic contributions were honorable rather than useless. The crucial problem with Crassus' gifts, however, is that they did not spring from a truly generous nature, but from a niggardly one. Avarice was Crassus' most important vice (*Crass.* 2.1–2, 6.6, 6.9, 17.9) and it had a negative influence on all other aspects of his behavior, including his euergetism and kindness. For although he was prepared to lend his money to everyone, even without interest, he always demanded it back when the time had expired (3.1). Particularly illustrative is his dealing with Alexander, his teacher of philosophy, to whom he gave a cloak whenever he went abroad, though only in order to ask for it back as soon as the journey was over (3.7). Nothing, not even a simple cloak, seemed to be given with a liberal hand and a generous heart, without expecting a return (cf. *Political Precepts* 822B: *anti mēdenos*). Crassus' gifts were always calculated,¹¹ and this avarice in the end perverted everything else. Hence, in spite of all his rich contributions, he fundamentally remained niggardly, and in spite of his clear affability and kindness, he ended up as selfish (*authadēs*) (*Crass.* 19.7; *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 5.3) whereas Pompey, ironically enough, for all his magnificence (*ogkos*), is later praised for his *philanthrōpia* (21.2).

* * *

In several respects, Nicias is strikingly similar to his Roman counterpart Crassus. Again, we encounter a rich politician who tried to gain influence and power by means of large

donations. Moreover, unlike his opponent Cleon, he did not aim at base popular entertainment but usually spent his money on more worthy projects (*Nic.* 3.1–2). In this, of course, he showed a concern for outward ostentation that was rooted in ambition and thirst for fame (4.1), and his conduct could even be called demagogic (2.4, 3.1, 4.1), yet Plutarch adds that such “demagogy” was in Nicias’ case only a consequence of piety (4.1). Once again, then, it is tempting to conclude that Nicias basically qualifies as a good example of a rich politician who uses his money for honorable and philosophically justifiable purposes.¹² In this case too, however, such an oversimplifying conclusion would rather fit in with the systematic pedagogy of the *Political Precepts* than with the more nuanced discussions in the *Lives*. Just as in Crassus’ case, indeed, Nicias’ expenditures were based on a wrong motivation. His main vice was not avarice but fear. Time and again, the *Life of Nicias* shows how both the political and military decisions of the great statesman rested on uncertainty, timidity, and cowardice. His euergetic donations were no exception. In Plutarch’s words: “in general, his cowardice was a source of income to the wicked and his *philanthrōpia* to the good” (4.3; cf. also *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 1.2). Both components deserve further discussion.

Although Nicias’ *philanthrōpia* was no doubt more than just liberality (Martin (1961) 173–174; Frazier (1996) 235–236), it did not imply friendly sociability. As a matter of fact, Nicias was usually inaccessible, because he was always occupied with matters of public interest, even while bathing or eating (5.1–7). In that sense, one might well observe that Nicias regarded politics as his life (cf. *Political Precepts* 823C on the good politician: *tēn politeian bion ... hēgoumenos*). This preoccupation with politics, however, was not really honorable, since it lacked a rational foundation and could mainly be traced back to caution (*Nic.* 5.1). Furthermore, Nicias’ general inaccessibility was combined with dignity (*to semnon*) (2.4) and even with pompous magnificence (*ogkos*) (5.3, 5.7, 15.2), and further on in the *Life*, Plutarch says that the statesman’s way of life was neither humane nor popular (*mē philanthrōpon mēde dēmotikon*) but unsocial and oligarchic (*ameikton kai oligarchikon*) (11.2). And since Nicias often opposed the people and forced them into useful decisions, he became offensive (*epachthēs*) (11.2).

The second component, however, which is Nicias’ cowardice, made his dignity somewhat less offensive (*epachthes* again; 2.4). As Plutarch explains, it was Nicias’ obvious fear of the multitude that made him so popular, since the people precisely like men who are afraid of them (2.6). However, although Nicias’ timid conduct might suggest a certain “respect” for the people, it has nothing to do with Plutarch’s ideal of *homodēmein* (*Political Precepts* 823B). Nicias never became a man of the people, but always maintained his aristocratic aloofness.

This peculiar amalgam of dignity and cowardice made its influence felt throughout the whole of Nicias’ career. On the one hand, it prevented him from controlling the negative influence of demagogues such as Cleon and Alcibiades. On the other hand, in spite of this failure to bend Athenian politics to his will, the people continued to appoint him as their leader (*Nic.* 12.4–6; *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 3.6). This is a typical pattern that often occurs in Plutarch’s *Lives*: in spite of a famous politician’s unsociability and unpopularity, the people turn to him whenever they face serious difficulties.¹³ This also shows the relative value of political means such as euergetism and affability. These can play a significant part in the pursuit of power and fame, to be sure, but in the end, virtue and competence are at least as important.

Aurea Mediocritas: Toward an Ideal Equilibrium

The above case studies sufficiently show how the clear-cut distinctions of the *Political Precepts* often fail to do justice to more concrete political circumstances. A rich politician can perfectly combine splendid contributions of money with friendliness and affability (Crassus), or dignity (Nicias), or even both (Cimon). Too much aristocratic dignity risks entailing haughty magnificence, which often implies the loss of popular favor, though not necessarily the loss of all influence. On the other hand, kind sociability usually attracts the people and may show sincere concern for their well-being, although it is only effective when it has a *fundamentum in persona*.¹⁴ Moreover, just like euergetic contributions, it should never degenerate into vicious demagoguery and flattery of the people.¹⁵ Large donations, kind sociability, *philanthrōpia*, and *semnotēs* all yield interesting opportunities, but none of them is an absolute guarantee of political success. The careers of many famous statesmen discussed in the *Lives* illustrate that a well-balanced mixture of different qualities that avoids excessive one-sidedness frequently produces the best results.

An interesting example of such a mixture can be found in the *Life of Publicola*. Valerius Publicola quickly became famous through his eloquence and wealth. Whereas he used the former in the service of justice, he showed his humanity (*philanthrōpia*) through his liberal financial support of the poor (1.2; cf. *Comp. Sol.-Pub.* 1.7). From the very beginning of this *Life*, then, Plutarch makes it clear that he found in Valerius a laudable combination of a virtuous disposition, a willingness to spend money for an honorable purpose, and an attitude of humanity. This humanity also became evident in his general accessibility (4.5). Despite his conspicuous descent (1.1), Valerius apparently never lost touch with the people.

At the same time, however, his principled, energetic, and successful interventions for the sake of the public interest obviously showed an aristocratic nature (cf. 2.4) that far surpassed other citizens. No wonder, then, that he was soon elected to the consulship (7.7) and obtained great power after the death of his colleague, Brutus. This political growth also resulted in more dignified behavior. His triumph for the victory over Tarquin provided a magnificent and solemn (*semnēs*) spectacle, without being offensive to the people (9.9). His *semnotēs* became offensive (*ēchthonto*; 10.1), however, when it turned into *ogkos* (10.3). Especially his consulship *sine collega* and his splendid house, which was hard to reach, were a source of general disapproval (10.2–3). At this crucial moment of Valerius' career, the precarious equilibrium between dignity and affability was on the verge of being destroyed. Valerius reacted immediately: in one night, he tore his house down and thus recovered the esteem of the people (10.5). He also had the axes removed from the lictor's rods and had the rods themselves lowered to the people as a token of respect (10.7; cf. *Comp. Sol.-Pub.* 2.1 and 2.5), thus enhancing his popularity and power even more (10.8). Then he also received his surname Publicola or "friend of the people" (10.9). This name, together with the public mourning that followed his death (23.4), showed that the delicate balance between his great power and his sincere concern and sympathy for his people was never broken again.

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The *Life of Aemilius* is no less interesting in this context. At the outset, Plutarch underlines an important difference between Aemilius Paulus and other politicians. Aemilius

neither began his political career as an advocate nor courted the favor of the people by the customary kind salutations, not because he was unable to do so but because he preferred to acquire a reputation for his virtue (2.6). This immediately sets the tone: splendid euergetism or affability were apparently no major elements in Aemilius' general policy, and even the aspect of *semnotēs* does not receive attention in the *Life*, presumably because it is still too connected with outward behavior. Giving priority to virtue, Aemilius was inner directed, and moreover, this approach proved quite successful, since he was elected aedile over twelve strong competitors (3.1).

Aemilius showed the same general attitude throughout the rest of his career. Whatever office he held, he always worked with the same scrupulous precision and even principled inflexibility, and his pursuit of a complete independence from the people forms a remarkable leitmotif in the *Life*.¹⁶ In that sense, one may well wonder whether Aemilius was not an obvious counterexample of the ideal mixture of affability, euergetism, and dignity. The whole of his career rather illustrated the minor importance of these components. Near the end of the *Life*, this theme is emphasized once again: although Aemilius never said or did anything in order to win the favor of the multitude and always adopted the aristocratic policy of the leading class, he was extremely popular with the people (38.2 and 38.6). It is clear, then, that Aemilius was one of the many great statesmen who derived their popularity and fame from their competence and *auctoritas* rather than from euergetism or sociability.

Yet, in the background, a different motif appears. When discussing Aemilius' treatment of other peoples, Plutarch points to a completely different attitude. In Spain, 250 cities voluntarily submitted themselves to him (4.3). To the Ligurians, he offered humane (*philanthrōpon*) and conciliatory terms for peace (6.4), as he did to the Macedonians (28.6), and his stay in Greece was both famous and humane (*philanthrōpon* once again; 28.1). This theme culminates at the very end of the *Life*, as a counterpart to Plutarch's general evaluation of the relation between Aemilius and his own people in chapter 38. In the very last chapter, Plutarch tells how Aemilius' bier was also carried by young Iberians, Ligurians, and Macedonians,

while the more elderly followed with the procession calling aloud upon Aemilius as benefactor (*euergetēs*) and preserver of their countries. For not only at the times of his conquests had he treated them all with mildness and humanity (*philanthrōpōs*), but also during all the rest of his life he was ever doing them some good and caring for them (*kēdomenos*) as though they had been kindred and relations. (39.8–9, trans. B. Perrin)

In the end, euergetism, humanity, and kind sociability thus appeared to be part and parcel of Aemilius' career, and even proved particularly efficient in raising the good will of others, although they were confined to non-Roman people. Unlike Publicola, Aemilius never blended principled virtue and humane sociability into one harmonious disposition that he adopted toward everyone, to be sure, but he nevertheless perfectly succeeded in reaching a well-balanced equilibrium between these two aspects of his attitude.

* * *

The *Life of Phocion*, finally, begins with an interesting proem that explicitly confirms what has already become clear from several of the above case studies. In this proem,

Plutarch rejects both too strict a political course that always opposes the people's wishes and an excessively lax policy that all too often indulges in its shortcomings, and recommends a balanced mixture of dignity (*to semnon*) and reasonableness (*tō epieikei*) (2.7–9). This ideal was reached by Phocion (and by his Roman counterpart Cato the Younger), whose character showed an ideal mixture of severity (*to austēron*) and humanity (*tou philanthrōpon*), caution and bravery, solicitude for others (*tēs huper allōn kēdemonias*) and fearlessness for himself (3.8), as appears from his whole career.

In general, Phocion resembled Aemilius in adopting a particularly independent course. Throughout the *Life*, the Athenian statesman continuously disagrees with his people¹⁷ and never courts their favor, yet the Athenians time and again elected him *in absentia* as a general (8.2–3). Phocion, then, is yet another example of a politician whose success is based on competence and virtue rather than on euergetism or sociability.

Euergetism was completely absent from Phocion's career, and yet, in a way, it was not. As a poor politician, he rightly refused to contribute large sums (9.1). Moreover, he never accepted gifts from others (18.1–8, 21.3–5, 30.1) but preferred to boast of his poverty like others took pride in their splendid festivals. Plutarch indeed says that he displayed (*epedeiknuto*) his poverty as a virtue (30.5). Quite interestingly, destitution can be no less efficient as a means for *epideixis* than lavish donations. Nevertheless, Phocion never denied the importance of such euergetism and actually persuaded others to spend their money in this way (31.3).

On the other hand, Phocion did not have recourse to kind affability in order to compensate for his poverty, and yet, in a way, he did. Plutarch in fact argues that Phocion's character was most gentle and humane (*philanthrōpotatos*) (5.1) and, again, that he was usually sociable and humane (*philanthrōpon*), except in matters of public interest, where he was harsh and inflexible (10.7).

Phocion's career thus shows a remarkable mixture of different components, the most important of which is, no doubt, his independence. This recalls Aemilius' general approach, but whereas the latter's independence was juxtaposed by humanity, both being directed in a fairly systematic way toward different domains, Phocion's independence was often colored by particular touches of humanity and friendly concern for others, which, somewhat paradoxically, frequently enhanced and underlined his independence rather than damaging it.

3. Conclusion

At the end of this chapter, it may be interesting to return for a brief moment to Plutarch's Chaeronea or to any other provincial town in the Roman Empire of the second century CE. What can the local politician, who is occupied with his minor administrative tasks, learn from his reading of the *Lives*? Can he still imitate these great heroes of the glorious past? Perhaps he can, although he should not slavishly copy their behavior. He may at his own level, and under his own circumstances, exercise himself in *philanthrōpia*, show himself affable or dignified or both, and – if he is rich – spend his money on honorable projects. But if the *Lives* show him one thing, it is surely that politics had always been a terribly complicated business, and that political success or failure often depended as much – if not more – on the favor of Lady *Fortuna* as on honorable philosophical

considerations and careful planning. In Plutarch's *Political Precepts*, the contemporary politician could find interesting advice about the ideal political course. From the *Lives*, he could learn that harsh reality is usually more complex than such theory, and real life often more demanding than high-minded philosophy.¹⁸

NOTES

- 1 To a certain extent, however, the *Lives* also have a "timeless" character; Pelling (1995) 208–217 and (2002b). That the choice of heroes may have been influenced by the new political climate under Trajan is argued by Geiger (2002). For allusions to topics of contemporary relevance in the *Lives*, see Stadter (2002) and Schettino (2002).
- 2 Much has been written about this topic. See e.g. Weber (1959), Carrière (1977), Aalders (1982), Desideri (1986a), Stadter and Van der Stockt (2002), de Blois et al. (2004–2005), and Pelling in this volume.
- 3 For this connection between confidence, willingness, and power, see e.g. *On Inoffensive Self-Praise* 539EF; *That a Philosopher Should Especially Converse with Men in Power* 777EF; *Political Precepts* 799C and 820F–821D; *On the "Unnoticed Life"* 1129C; *Life of Agis* 2.1; Roskam (2004/5) 98–100 and (2009) 109–113.
- 4 On (the crucial importance of) the widespread practice of euergetism in Plutarch's day, see e.g. A.H.M. Jones (1971) 167–168 and 175–176; Veyne (1976); C.P. Jones (1978) 19–20 and 104–114; Quet (1981).
- 5 See e.g. Renoirte (1951) 40; Carrière and Cuvigny (1984) 8; see also Weber (1959) 60 n. 194: "Hier spricht Plutarch sicherlich aus ureigenstem Erleben und tiefster Überzeugung. In dieser Weise wird er selbst in seiner Heimatstadt Chaironeia gewirkt haben."
- 6 On the importance of *ogkos* and related concepts in the *Lives*, see e.g. Bucher-Isler (1972) 54–55; Wardman (1974) 63–65; Frazier (1996) 253–255.
- 7 On the topic of the unity between *Moralia* and *Lives*, see now Nikolaidis (2008). A case study of the relation between the *Political Precepts* and the *Life of Agis* can be found in Roskam (2005).
- 8 In his anti-Stoic polemic *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, Plutarch refers to the Stoic doctrine that the sage should act "just as if" he considered wealth to be a good, in order to argue that Chrysippus' doctrines are unfit for use in real life (1034B).
- 9 But cf. Wardman (1974) 80: "according to this passage, wealth does at times fall within the class of things that are *kala*. However, this seems to me loose writing on Plutarch's part; as the story about Pericles makes plain, it is the use which is made of wealth, not the acquisition of it, which deserves to be called fine."
- 10 Although it is fair to add that Plutarch explains the lack of success of Crassus' and Pompey's joint consulship not by the former's lack of talents but by the contentiousness of both colleagues (12.3).
- 11 Contrast the behavior of Vibius Paciacus, one of the minor characters in the *Life of Crassus*, which serves to highlight Crassus' avarice even more (4.3–5.6).
- 12 Cf. also *Comp. Nic.-Crass.* 1.4, where Plutarch explicitly prefers Nicias to Crassus because the former was in his contributions "more public spirited in his noble ambition to make offerings to the gods and provide the people with gymnastic exhibitions and trained choruses" (trans. B. Perrin).
- 13 This general "rule" is illustrated, for instance, in the careers of Cato the Elder (*Cat. Mai.* 16.4–8), Aemilius Paulus (*Aem.* 10.1), and Phocion (*Phoc.* 8.2–3), and is more fully elaborated in key passages such as *Political Precepts* 823C–E and *Life of Eumenes* 14.1–11.

- 14 Accordingly, Antipater failed to conceal his tyrannical rule behind the façade of a simple, ordinary way of life (*Phoc.* 29.3). See also Nikolaidis (2009) 285.
- 15 Cf. *Galb.* 11.3; cf. also the slanderous attacks against Cimon (*Cim.* 10.8) and the beginning of Pericles' career (*Per.* 9.1–2).
- 16 It became especially evident when he was elected consul for the second time (*Aem.* 10.4 and 11.1–2); cf. also 36.2. For a valuable general discussion of the topic of the politician's independence in Plutarch's *Lives* see Beck (2004).
- 17 See e.g. 8.4–5, 9.1–10, 10.1, 16.1–3, 16.6, 20.5, 23.3–7, 24.3–5.
- 18 I am much indebted to M. Tröster for his interesting suggestions and valuable comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Excellent general studies of Plutarch's *Lives* can be found in Duff (1999) and Pelling (2002a). Also important are Wardman (1974) (see esp. pp. 63–69 on the appearance of the "*politicus*," and pp. 79–86 on wealth) and Frazier (1996) (see esp. pp. 231–255 on the "douceur et humanité du héros").

The most recent collection of studies on different aspects of Plutarch's political position is de Blois et al. (2004–2005). More literature can be found in n. 2 above.

The classic study of euergetism in antiquity is Veyne (1976). Especially interesting for Plutarch's position on this topic is Trapp (2004), who shows that Plutarch's philosophical reinterpretation of the contemporary euergetic system was both high-minded and unrealistic. A penetrating discussion of the topic of euergetism in the *Lives* of Cimon and Lucullus is to be found in Beck (2007). More literature can be found in n. 4 above. Cf. also Desideri (1986b).

Good discussions of Plutarch's ideal of *philanthrōpia* can be found in Hirzel (1912) 23–32 and in Martin (1961). The latter connects the concept of *philanthrōpia* in Plutarch with civilization and Hellenism. See also the recent valuable collection of essays in Ribeiro Ferreira et al. (2009).

The topic of the politician's independence is discussed very well by Beck (2004), who also points to the differences between the *Political Precepts* and the *Lives* in this respect.

PART IV

The Reception of Plutarch

CHAPTER 36

The Reception of Plutarch from Antiquity to the Italian Renaissance

Marianne Pade

1. The Roman Empire and Early Byzantine Period

Antonine Rome was a focal point for the earliest reception of Plutarch's work.¹ A central figure was the orator Fronto (c. 100–c. 166), who did much to further the dissemination of his works (Stok 1998 57). Together with Plutarch's nephew Sextus, Fronto was the teacher of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. Neither Fronto nor Marcus mentions Plutarch explicitly, but the latter names Sextus as one of those who were responsible for important traits in his character, such as friendliness and his appreciation of a patriarchal household (*Meditationes* 1.9.1). Scholars have recently pointed to an affinity between Plutarch's and Fronto's political thought, and there are echoes of passages from the *Lives* in some of Fronto's letters (Stok (1998) 58) and, possibly, in Marcus' *Meditations*. An example of this is the passage where Marcus tells us that "through my brother Severus ... I got to know Thræsea, Helvidius, Cato, Dion, Brutus" (*Meditationes* 1.14.1);² here the coupling of the names of Dion and Brutus might suggest that Marcus was thinking of the Plutarchan pair. The relationship between Sextus, Fronto, and their imperial pupils is recorded in the *Historia Augusta* (*Aurelianus* 3.2 and *Verus* 2.5) and also by Eutropius in a passage that was later misunderstood as saying that Fronto, like Sextus, was Plutarch's nephew (8.12.1); this mistake was repeated in the eighth century by Paulus Diaconus in his *Historia Romana* (PL 95, c. 886). Incidentally, Sextus was to be mentioned several times during the Middle Ages, most notably in St. Jerome's *Chronicle*, a fact that helped to prevent the name of his originally much more famous uncle from falling completely into oblivion (see below).

Apuleius of Madaurus (mid-120s–?) provides us with a significant testimony to Plutarch's early fame among Latin-speaking readers: he makes Lucius, the unfortunate narrator of the *Metamorphoses* who is transformed into an ass, claim to be related

to Plutarch on his mother's side, and to his nephew, the philosopher Sextus (1.2.1; Keulen (2007) 92–95). The description of Lucius' famous ancestry was no doubt meant as a tribute to a fellow philosopher with whom Apuleius shared certain religious, philosophical, and moral ideas. Most important among the themes that appear both in Plutarch and in Apuleius' writings is the reconciliation of Platonic philosophy and the religion of Isis as expressed in Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (*On Isis and Osiris*); but several other examples of the influence of the *Moralia* may be found, for instance, in Apuleius' use of the *De genio Socratis* (*On the Sign of Socrates*; Harrison (2000) 163).

In fact, the interest of most Roman writers seems to have centered on the *Moralia*. Aulus Gellius (c. 130–c. 180) was especially interested in the *Quaestiones convivales* (*Table Talk*) and paraphrased a long passage in the *Noctes Atticae* (Gell. 17.11.1–6 – *Quaest. conv.* 697F–700B); centuries later Macrobius (fourth to fifth century?) makes ample use of Gellius, repeating, although very freely, Gellius' quotation from the *Quaestiones* (*Saturnalia* 7.15.2–3 and 16–24; Stok 1998 71–80). Gellius not only quoted Plutarch's works, he also discussed his character, praising him as learned and wise (1.26.4 and 4.11.11). In connection with an anecdote about Plutarch punishing a slave, Gellius mentions the treatise *De cohibenda ira* (1.26.7), thus supplying medieval Western readers with almost the only piece of positive information they would have about any of Plutarch's works.

Plutarch's influence in the following centuries may be judged from the way his language, style, and literary form were imitated: Appianus, a protégé of Fronto, was influenced by Plutarch's language and in his *Roman History* compared Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar, and Epaminondas and the Elder Scipio; this suggests that these two *Lives*, now lost, circulated at an early date (Bucher (2000) 452–458). The literary form of the *Lives* was imitated by Amyntianus (second or third century) who, according to Photius (ninth century), wrote parallel lives, pairing the tyrant Dionysius with Domitian and Philip of Macedon with Augustus (cod. 131, Bekker p. 97a).

Lucian of Samosata (c. 115/125–after 180) was a prolific writer and worked in several genres. As far as I know, it has never been shown that Lucian knew or used any of Plutarch's works, although there are some parallels. One thing Plutarch and Lucian definitely do have in common is the use of the dialogue as a literary form. Lucian uses the genre in an innovative way, especially in the satirical pieces; before him dialogue in prose literature had been associated mainly with philosophical works, notably in the form of the Socratic dialogue developed by Plato. After a long period of almost total eclipse the dialogue had reappeared with Plutarch; but whether Lucian was actually inspired by Plutarch is impossible to say, though it may seem an improbable coincidence that the genre should resurface independently in Greek literature in two writers so close to one another in time.

The sophist or grammarian Athenaeus (fl. c. 200) is another writer who uses a literary form known from Plutarch's works. His *Deipnosophistai* (*The Learned Banquet*) continues the tradition of Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales*, but Athenaeus also goes further in honoring his model by giving his name to one of the interlocutors, the *grammaticus* Plutarchus.

Not only was Plutarch's language imitated, but he was also considered an authority on style and language: the *Vitae decem oratorum* (*Lives of the Ten Orators*), no. 41 in the Lamprias Catalogue, is now generally considered spurious, but apparently circulated under Plutarch's name as early as the second century (Lesky (1963) 885). Its

subject-matter, lives of Attic orators, is also one that is central to the interests of the Second Sophistic, not least in view of the prevalent Atticism of the period. It is interesting that even at that early date we find spurious works attributed to Plutarch in literary circles in Antonine Rome. Plutarch himself was a moderate Atticist and was criticized by the more orthodox Phrynichus (second century) in the *Eclogae*, a part of the latter's *Atticistes* (*The Attic Speaker*), for his use of the word *dusopia*. In the treatise *Peri dusopias* (*On Shame*) Plutarch defines the term as meaning "shame" or "embarrassment" (*Mor.* 528c–536d), whereas according to Phrynichus the meaning is "suspicion" (no. 161). In another entry Phrynichus chides Plutarch for using an unsatisfactory word, or one not approved of according to strict Attic standards. Plutarch describes as a *synkrisis*, comparison, his *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander* (*Mor.* 853a–854d), and Phrynichus wonders how the wise man could use such a word or the related verb *synkrinein*, compare (no. 243).

Another testimony to the sophists' interest in Plutarch's literary style, or Plutarch as a judge of style, is found in a letter of Flavius Philostratus (160/170–244/249), the author of the *Lives of the Sophists* and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. The letter of Philostratus (no. 73) was once considered spurious, but nowadays its anachronisms, mainly the author's urging his patroness, the empress Julia Domna, to persuade the long-dead Plutarch to change his attitude toward sophists, are seen as a cleverly contrived literary ploy. In the letter Philostratus proves the respectability of his profession by implicating Plato: when even the philosopher can use the style of Gorgias, so can everyone else. The problem was that Plutarch had remained adamant on the question, and Julia must persuade him not to attack the sophists or speak ill of Gorgias (Anderson (1986) 4–5 and 277). Obviously Plutarch's opinion carried so much weight that it was worthwhile to persuade him of one's point of view.

In Menander Rhetor's treatise *Peri epideiktikon* (*On Epideictic Speeches*, late third century?) we hear that the *Lives*, being full of stories, apophthegms, and proverbs, are very useful for conversation as well as for a variety of educational purposes. Menander's advice, or the attitude which it represents, may explain why collections of sayings, *Apophthegmata*, were beginning to be attributed to Plutarch; they were the result of rhetorical or grammatical exercises. His status as an educational writer is also seen in the various *florilegia* that were made from his works, as for instance that of the fifth-century writer Stobaeus.

Plutarch's works, not least the *Lives*, continued to be used as historical and antiquarian sources, and we may trace his influence also through the many quotations from his works we find in later writers: Polyaeus (c. 100–?), who dedicated his longest work, the *Strategemata* (*Stratagems of War*), to the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, records the tricks and exploits of several Plutarchan heroes, namely Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, Lysander, Alexander, and Agis. One of the anecdotes that clearly indicate Polyaeus' dependence on Plutarch is the story of how Cimon made the allies choose the ornaments of the prisoners taken at Sestos and Byzantium as their lot. The Athenians were then left with the naked prisoners themselves, for which they eventually received a rich ransom. Plutarch's version is a little longer, but the elements of the story are exactly the same and there are many verbal parallels (see esp. *Cim.* 9.2–5 and *Strateg.* 1.34.2).

Pausanias, who wrote in the second century CE, generally shows more interest in the monuments of his country from before the time Greece lost its freedom in the second

century BCE. Evidently the antiquarian lore in Plutarch would have been a welcome source for his *Periegesis* (*Description of Greece*). While Pausanias never quotes Plutarch explicitly, he relates events treated by Plutarch – for example in the *Aemilius Paulus*, *Flaminius*, and *Sulla* – so frequently that it seems probable that closer study would reveal echoes of these *Lives* (Ziegler (1951) c. 947).

The historian Cassius Dio Cocceianus (c. 155–235) composed a *Roman History*, originally in eighty books and covering the period from Aeneas to Dio's own consulate in 229. More than half is now missing, but we have copious excerpts made on the instructions of the emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus (tenth century), and the epitomes compiled by the monk Ioannes Xiphilinus (eleventh century, of Books 36–80) and by Ioannes Zonaras (twelfth century). One would expect Dio to have consulted the *Lives* for the early period of his work, but the question is much debated. In the excerpts there are two not quite certain references to Plutarch as a source, but, more importantly, Plutarch's *Brutus* seems to be Dio's source in his narrative of events leading to the murder of Caesar and to Philippi and in the story of how Brutus' wife Porcia persuaded her husband to confide in her. There are too many verbal similarities in the two accounts of the popular appeal to Brutus to imitate his famous forefather for it to be likely that Dio could be independent of Plutarch here. Moreover, the parallels follow the same order: first we hear that the people wrote on the statue of the elder Brutus, and that some of the graffiti said "if only you were here now," "if only you were alive"; then that the praetorial tribunal of Brutus himself was covered with such writings as "Brutus, you are asleep," and "You are not really Brutus" (*Brut.* 9.5–7 and Dio 44.12.2–3).

In the story about Porcia proving herself worthy to be taken into Brutus' confidence over the conspiracy the verbal similarities are fewer, but the main elements are the same: Porcia sensed that Brutus was worried and believed that he would not trust her with his secrets because she was a woman and therefore physically weak. To prove her tolerance for physical pain she cut a deep gash in her thigh and eventually showed the wound to Brutus to convince him that she was worthy of his confidence – which she then received (*Brut.* 13.3–11 and Dio 44.13.1–14.1). Admittedly some details in the two versions are fairly different, but in my opinion this merely suggests that the authors emphasize different aspects of the story. Plutarch does much more to introduce Porcia, she speaks longer and apparently submits herself to the ordeal in order to prove herself worthy of trust over the conspiracy. In Dio's account the ordeal has a much more practical function: Porcia wants to show that she could keep a secret even under torture. Perhaps this is the interpretation of an experienced courtier and imperial official.

In his *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* Diogenes Laertius (probably first half of third century CE) uses Plutarch several times, for instance when he records that Speusippus, like Sulla, died of the *morbus pedicularis* (phthiriasis, the lousy distemper), or how Alexander proudly quoted Homer to his friends, hinting at his own divinity (4.4; cf. *Sull.* 36.5–6, 9.60; *Alex.* 28.1). The Athenian rhetor Sopater mentions Alcibiades as an example of stubbornness and says that this trait was illustrated by Thucydides and by Plutarch in the life (Walz (1835) 8: 2). The medical writer Oribasius quotes *Lysander* for information about the obol and the names of other coins (Oribasius, *CMG* VI.3, ed. Raeder, *Synopsis ad Eustathium* 2.58.12; *Lys.* 17.3). In the *Praeparatio Evangelica* (*Preparation for the Gospel*) of Eusebius of Caesarea (260–339) there is frequent mention of Plutarch, often as agreeing with Plato, the pagan writer most favorably regarded by

Eusebius (e.g. 3.8.2 and 11.35.6). In his *Chronicle*, now lost but known in Jerome's Latin version, Plutarch was again mentioned several times.

By the fourth century Plutarch was held in almost unparalleled esteem by many writers, such as the sophist Himerius (c. 310–c. 390) and the Neoplatonist historian Eunapius (c. 345–420), for whom Plutarch embodied the charm and poetry of all philosophy (2.1.1–9). The popularity of the *Lives* seems to have continued undiminished at least until the sixth century: they were praised by the Constantinopolitan Agathias (c. 531–c. 580), who mentions a statue erected by the Romans in honor of Plutarch who had compared noble Greeks and warlike Romans but had never been able to write a parallel to his own life, because he had no equal (*Anthologia Palatina* 16.331).

Plutarch's enormous popularity in the Greek literature of the Roman Empire and of the early Byzantine period was to a large degree confined to a Greek readership, whereas the situation in the Latin West was rather different. Apart from the group of second-century writers mentioned above and Macrobius (early fifth century), Latin writers rarely mention Plutarch or quote him. However, Jerome's translation of Eusebius' *Chronicon* remained in use in later centuries. In it we hear that Plutarch, together with Musonius, was a prominent philosopher during Nero's reign (Abr. 2084, i.e. 68 CE). Though somewhat inaccurate, this strange piece of information rescued Plutarch's name from complete oblivion, as it was repeated by Latin chroniclers all through the Middle Ages.

2. Medieval Byzantium

It has been maintained that Plutarch's popularity reached a low point in the seventh and eighth centuries. Admittedly evidence for a continued interest is not overwhelming, but we do have three testimonies from the seventh century and one from the early years of the ninth, i.e. the *Chronicon Paschale*, Georgius Pisides, Johannes of Antioch, and Georgius Syncellus (Pade (2007) 1.54–55). In the ninth century Photius dedicated two entire volumes to Plutarch, the codices 161 and 245 of his encyclopedic work *Bibliotheca* (Schamp (1995)).

In contrast, Plutarch was held in the highest esteem during the following centuries. In his poem celebrating the conquest of Crete by Nicephorus Phocas in 961, Theodosius Diaconus (tenth century) mentions Plutarch, together with Homer, as a writer able to confer eternal glory on his subject (Criscuolo (1979) preface). In an epigram emphasizing religious tolerance the metropolitan Johannes Mauropus (eleventh century) mentions Plato and Plutarch as the two pagans who may be saved from the wrath of Christ because they were by nature closest to divine law in doctrine and character (Krumbacher (1897) 740). In the twelfth century the impoverished Johannes Tzetzes chose to keep a Plutarch as his only book – as Theodore Gaza in the fifteenth century would have done, had the need arisen (Russell (1972) 146). In the *History* of Nicetas Choniates (twelfth–thirteenth century) Plutarch, together with Lucian and Euripides, is the most frequently quoted classical author (Hunger (1978) 1.439).

The variety of information found in all parts of Plutarch's works made them an encyclopedia of the classical world and thus a precious source for compilers of scholia, commentaries, and lexicæ, such as the *Etymologicum Genuinum* (ninth century), the *Suda* (tenth century), the *Etymologicum Gudianum* (eleventh century), the *Etymologicum Symeonis* and *Etymologicum Magnum* (twelfth century), and the fourteenth-century

Lexicon Vindobonense, and Plutarch is the source for Attic usage in the handbook of Thomas Magister (thirteenth–fourteenth century). However, although widely read for both pleasure and study, Plutarch was never a school author, a fact that may explain the scarcity of scholia to his works (Garzya (1998) 19).

The increased interest in Plutarch in the ninth century had also led to the assembly of two corpora of the *Lives* in two and three volumes respectively, the so-called *editio bipartita* and *tripartita*. The *editio bipartita* has survived in an eleventh- to twelfth-century manuscript in Seittenstetten, a fourteenth-century manuscript in Madrid, and in numerous copies of those. Our earliest manuscripts of the *editio tripartita* date from the tenth century. The textual tradition of the *Moralia* is more complex; sometimes texts from the two corpora are transmitted together, but generally they remain separate (Garzya (1998) 16).

The most important figure in the history of Plutarchan studies in Byzantium was Maximus Planudes (1255–before 1305), who collected everything by Plutarch that was still extant and organized the production of carefully edited and corrected copies, of which we now possess Biblioteca Ambrosiana, gr. 859 (C 126 inf.), begun in 1294 and finished in about a year, and Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 1671, written between 1295 and 1296 and belonging to the type of the *editio tripartita*. Bibliothèque Nationale, gr. 1672, the only complete copy of Plutarch surviving, was formerly assumed to have been written under Planudes' direction a little after 1302,³ but must be dated, however, to a period at least half a century after Planudes' death. The *editio bipartita* seems to have become the model for the fifteenth-century editions of the Latin translations of the *Lives* in which the pairs are ordered only according to chronology, not geography, with the important difference that it is the chronology of the Roman heroes that determines the sequence.

Plutarch was thus read continuously during the entire Byzantine period, whereas his influence in the West practically stopped with Macrobius. Although not as omnipresent as Homer or Plato, his influence remained noticeable in Greek literature and he was a household name to the educated public in the East until the sixth century. His readers were apparently fewer in the following period, but they still existed, and beginning in the ninth century we see a widespread resurgence of interest in his works.

3. The Latin West

In the Latin West probably no genuine writings of Plutarch circulated in any form during the Middle Ages, but even so his name was not completely forgotten. Gellius, Eutropius, Macrobius, Arnobius, St. Jerome, and Cassiodorus, who all mention him, continued to be read, and the information they supplied was repeated by later writers. From the twelfth century Plutarch's name began to appear in new contexts. In the letter of dedication to his translation of the *Phaedo*, Henricus Aristippus of Palermo claims that some writings of Plutarch were found in Sicily in his time. He probably means the *Moralia*. The letter was written in 1156 to the Englishman Roboratus, who returned to England from Sicily. Henricus describes the libraries of the island where, amongst other philosophical writings, one could also find some of Plutarch's works: "In Sicily you have the Syracusan and Argolian libraries; Latin philosophy is not absent ... The philosophical writings of Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Themistius, Plutarch and other famous philosophers are in your hands ... In England you may find texts which are comparable to these and

all others of their sort” (Aristippus (1950) 89). Henricus’ remark about English manuscripts of classical authors is intriguing, if indeed that is how the comment on the similarity of English and Sicilian library holdings is to be understood. However that may be, Henricus found it worthwhile to praise Plutarch as a philosopher in the letter to Roboratus, who was at that time leaving Sicily for his native England.

Only a few years later, John of Salisbury (*c.* 1120–1180) published his *Policraticus*, in which an otherwise unknown work of Plutarch is quoted extensively. Though some scholars have argued that this work is John’s invention, others have maintained that he may have had access either to a genuine classical or late antique text attributed to Plutarch, or to a medieval work which he believed to be ancient and by Plutarch. The work quoted by John of Salisbury is the so-called *Institutio Traiani*, a didactic treatise on the theory of government allegedly written by Plutarch for his imperial pupil Trajan. Our earliest immediate source for this work is the group of sixteen Latin fragments in John’s *Policraticus* 5 and 6, completed in 1159 (Kloft and Kerner (1992) 127–130). The treatise itself is known only from the *Policraticus* and from works depending on it. In one passage, moreover, John refers to another otherwise unknown and probably spurious work by Plutarch, the *Archigrammaton* or *De magistratuum moderatione*. As this contains moral counsel for the ruler, it clearly has a thematic connection with the *Institutio*.

The *Policraticus* remained influential for several centuries. Widely used by writers such as Vincent of Beauvais (*c.* 1190–1264) and Walter Burley (1274/1275–1344/1345), material from John was diffused through multiple channels, and the first of the sixteen fragments of the *Institutio*, a letter from Plutarch to Trajan, was often transmitted independently (Pade (2007) 1.61–66).

The *Institutio* was accepted as a genuine work of Plutarch at least until well into the fifteenth century. An alternative theory was proposed by Wyttenbach, who in the first volume of his edition of the *Moralia* suggested that the *Institutio* was the work of a late antique Latin writer using a Byzantine compendium of the *Apophthegmata* and of various other works of Plutarch. Accordingly he printed the *Institutio* in volume five of his edition.⁴ In the twentieth century scholarly opinion has differed as to the origin of the *Institutio*. It has been suggested that the fragments are a forgery by John; recently scholars tend to think they are not, but the question has not been definitely resolved (Kloft and Kerner (1992) 105–106). However, we may have an indication that the *Institutio*, be it a late antique or a medieval forgery, existed separately from and before the publication of the *Policraticus*: in his letter to the Englishman Roboratus mentioned above, Henricus Aristippus praises the holdings of Sicilian libraries, amongst them the philosophical writings of Plutarch, and appears to imply that writings of Plutarch were to be found in English libraries too. Henricus and John of Salisbury were contemporaries, and the former, who obviously had connections in England, may well have heard about this interesting ancient work which was to play so prominent a role in the work of the English writer. We know of no other work by Plutarch, genuine or spurious, that circulated in England in this period.

4. Early Humanism

So, by the middle of the fourteenth century Plutarch was known in the Latin West almost exclusively as the author of the *Institutio Traiani*, and accordingly as the

teacher of Trajan.⁵ In Italy numerous copies circulated of fragment one of the *Institutio*, the letter from Plutarch to Trajan, but some Italian writers also had a direct knowledge of the *Policraticus*; for instance Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304–1374) and the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406; Weiss (1977) 206). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries we find short biographies of Plutarch, compiled on the basis of the information offered by John of Salisbury; one such is included in the *De viris illustribus*, written between 1332 and 1336 in Avignon by Giovanni Colonna (d. c. 1343/1344), the historian and friend of Petrarch; others are found in various encyclopedias such as the *Fons memorabilium universi* of Domenico di Bandino, left incomplete at Domenico's death in 1418 (Hankey (1957) and (1960)), and the *Granarium* of the Englishman John Whethamstede, composed between 1439 and 1443/1444.

Though Petrarch never managed to learn the language, he developed a keen interest in the Greek world and several times mentions Plutarch. He continues to think about Plutarch as the teacher of Trajan but also went beyond John's *Policraticus* to get information about him. Living for many years in Avignon, Petrarch was acquainted with several Greek scholars with whom he probably discussed Greek literature. At least he occasionally reveals knowledge of Plutarch which he could not have derived from any Latin source, as for instance when, in the *Letter to Seneca* (1348), he describes Plutarch as having compared Greek and Roman achievements in literature and statesmanship, evidently referring to the *Lives*.⁶

Even if Plutarch's name was not completely unknown in the Latin West by the second half of the fourteenth century, no genuine work of his was available to Latin readers until the Greek scholar Simon Atumanus translated *De cohibenda ira* (*On Restraining Anger*) at the beginning of the 1370s (DiStefano (1968) 11–16). Simon or perhaps Petrarch, with whom he was acquainted, may have become interested in this particular treatise because of the passage in which Aulus Gellius mentions that Plutarch had written about the sad effects of anger (1.26.7–8, see above). Simon's translation was sent to the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati some years later. Though he read the treatise with great interest, Salutati abhorred the language. Fortunately he knew from the *Institutio* that Plutarch was a better writer than Simon, so he decided to revise Simon's language – without recourse to the original. Salutati explains all this in his letter of dedication to Cardinal Pietro Corsini, who was also the dedicatee of Simon's translation. Salutati's version enjoyed a much wider circulation than Simon's; it reads much better, but is of course far removed from the original Greek.⁷

Less than ten years after Simon finished his Latin version of *De cohibenda ira*, Plutarch's *Lives* were translated for the first time. Around 1380 the Aragonese Juan Fernández de Heredia had a number of historical works translated into Aragonese, among them the *Lives*. They were first translated into demotic Greek, in Rhodes, and then into Aragonese (Álvarez Rodríguez (1983) and (2009)). At the beginning of the 1390s Salutati had heard about the Aragonese *Lives* and managed to procure a copy, with the intention of having them translated into Latin. This never happened; instead a Tuscan translation was produced, which is extant in at least fourteen manuscripts (Pade (2007) 1.76–87). Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, thanks to Salutati's efforts, there is a direct knowledge in Italy of one of Plutarch's *opuscula* and the majority of the *Lives*.

5. Fifteenth-Century Italian Humanism and the “Plutarchan Age”

Salutati's efforts to possess and disseminate these two translations signal the beginning of a vivid interest in Plutarch's writings in Italy: for the first time since antiquity readers in the Latin West were eager to acquire copies of his works or, much more often, of the many translations that were being produced from the late fourteenth and through the early fifteenth centuries, a period actually referred to by Roberto Weiss as the *Aetas plutarchiana* (Weiss (1977) 226).

Even so, it was the Byzantine diplomat and scholar Manuel Chrysoloras (c. 1350–1415) who made Plutarch one of the most widely studied Greek writers in Italy. Invited there by Salutati, Chrysoloras held the chair of Greek at Florence from 1397 to 1400 (Cammelli (1941) 28–42). He used Plutarch's works in his teaching and emphasized how his writings were proof of the very close relationship that once existed between Greeks and Romans (Salutati (1891–1911) 4.341–343), a relationship that Chrysoloras wanted to revive in order to persuade the West to help Byzantium against the Ottoman Turks. Several of Chrysoloras' pupils from Florence worked on Plutarch and translated considerable parts of his oeuvre into Latin.

The earliest of these were all made in Florence or by humanists connected to the Florentine intellectual milieu. Iacopo Angeli (c. 1360–1410/1411) was a close friend of Coluccio Salutati and was the first to publish a Latin translation of one of Plutarch's *Lives* directly from the Greek. In relatively few years he translated *Brutus* (1400), *Cicero* (1400/1401), *Pompey* and *Marius* (both probably before 1406). He also published the first translations of any of the *opuscula* after Simon Atumanus' fourteenth-century version of *De cobibenda ira*, namely *De Alexandri virtute aut fortuna* (*On Alexander's Virtue or Luck*) and *De fortuna Romanorum* (*On the Luck of the Romans*, both before 1409), both of which deal with the relative merits of some of the heroes described in the *Lives* (Weiss (1977) 255–277). Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444) was one of the most famous humanists of the first half of the fifteenth century. Since Hans Baron in the twentieth century published his works on Florentine humanism (especially Baron (1955) and (1966)), Bruni has been considered the embodiment of the “civic humanist,” a man who, like Cicero, was both statesman and man of letters and who used his classical learning in the service of his city; Bruni was actually chancellor of Florence from 1427 until his death in 1444 (Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson (1987) 21–46). It has been said that his Greek scholarship primarily intended to restore and renew Latin culture (Hankins (2002) 192). Certainly his work on Plutarch could be interpreted in that way: most of his Plutarchan translations are of the lives of famous generals and statesmen from the Roman Republic: Mark Antony (1404–1405), the Younger Cato (1405–1408), Aemilius Paulus (1408–1409), the Gracchi (1410), Quintus Sertorius (1408–1409 or 1410), and Cicero in the *Cicero novus*, his adaptation of Plutarch's *Cicero* (1413). His translation of the life of king Pyrrhus of Epirus (before 1413) was surely motivated by his interest in Roman Republican history, and his *Demosthenes* (1412) was intended as a foil for the *Cicero novus*, which reversed Plutarch's judgment and portrayed Cicero as the greater man, the ideal “civic humanist.” As a young man Bruni planned to translate all of Plutarch's *Lives* (Griffiths et al. (1987) 184–185); later in life he composed the *Vite di Dante e del Petrarca* (*Lives of Dante and Petrarch*,

1436), which in some ways mark a return to the Plutarchan model; the two lives, written in Italian, are clearly conceived as parallel lives, and they are followed by a comparison in Plutarch's manner (Bruni (1996) 537–560). Guarino Guarini of Verona (1374–1460), the famous teacher, was yet another of Chrysoloras' pupils and succeeded him at the Florentine *Studio* in 1410. By then he had worked and studied for five years (1403–1408) in Constantinople, where he translated Plutarch's *Alexander*; in Florence he produced Latin translations of Pseudo-Plutarch's *De liberis educandis* (*On the Education of Children*, 1411) and of *Lives* of interest for Roman history, i.e. *Flamininus* (1411), *Marcellus* (probably before June 1412), *Coriolanus* (before 1414), and *Caesar*, which was published together with his earlier version of *Alexander* (c. 1411–1413). All in all it was characteristic of the Florentine humanists' work on Plutarch in the early fifteenth century that thematically it reflects contemporary Florentine republican interpretations of history and the concern with the republican origins of the city (Pade (2007) 1, ch. 3).

An ardent admirer of Venice's stable, patrician constitution, Guarino moved there in 1414. He probably sympathized with the city's cultural orientation toward the East; certainly it was during the period Guarino was teaching in Venice that Plutarch's lives of Greek heroes became the focus of attention. Guarino himself translated six lives of Greek statesmen between 1414 and 1418 (*Dion*, *Themistocles*, *Phocion*, *Eumenes*, *Pelopidas*, and *Philopoemen*). Guarino's Latin *Dion*, a pupil of Plato and known for his non-populist policy, was dedicated to his pupil, the patrician Francesco Barbaro. The latter liked to see his city as Plato's ideal state come true and undoubtedly cherished the implicit comparison with Dion, the aristocrat who tried to realize Plato's ideal of the philosopher-ruler (Pade (forthcoming)). Barbaro himself published his translation of the pair *Aristides and Cato* two years later, while his fellow pupil, Leonardo Giustinian, translated *Cimon and Lucullus* and, almost twenty years later, *Phocion* (Pade (2007) 1, ch. 4).

6. Ideology and Patronage

While the heroic age of Plutarchan studies, the *Aetas plutarchiana*, may have ended by 1420, Florence again became a center for the study of Plutarch in the 1430s. Plutarch's pedagogical method in the *Lives*, where he aims at forming the reader's character through the examples of great public figures, also made the reception of his works dependent on ideological factors. Thus the renewed interest, especially in the *Lives*, may be seen as somehow reflecting the constitutional crisis of Florence during these years and the powerful presence of the Curia in the city. Cosimo de' Medici, the wealthiest man in Florence, was recalled from exile in 1434 and, like Augustus, managed to become *de facto* ruler of his city while seemingly preserving the republican constitutional system. Cosimo's self-presentation is reflected in the work of artists and intellectuals seeking Medici patronage. A whole series of translations from the *Lives* were dedicated to the Medici, expressing elements of Medici propaganda by more or less subtle historical parallels. One example of this is Antonio Pacini's translation of *Camillus* (after 1434), dedicated to Cosimo's brother Lorenzo, but implicitly addressing also Cosimo himself, who was frequently compared to Camillus after his return from exile. In the preface Pacini emphasizes the theme of Camillus' return to the utterly ruined state, which he then rebuilt. And like Camillus, Cosimo would eventually be hailed officially as *pater patriae* (Brown (1992) 2–52).

One of the Florentine intellectuals who had not supported the winning side in these turbulent years was Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481). Accordingly he had to look elsewhere for patronage. He advocated ancient Sparta, with her stable constitution, as inspiration for Florentine politicians. In the early 1430s he translated three works related to Sparta, Xenophon's *Agésilas*, his *Res publica Lacedaemoniorum*, and Plutarch's *Life of Lysurgus*, together with the other half of the pair, the *Life of the Roman king Numa* (1430). He dedicated all these works to the influential cardinal Nicola Albergati, stressing in his preface to the Plutarchan pair how the example of Lysurgus could help in the present situation of Florence (Pade (2007) 1.260–266).

Because of Pope Eugenius IV's long exile from Rome, mostly spent in Florence, the Roman Curia became another important cultural factor in the city in the 1430s – and another source of patronage for Florentine humanists. Eugenius was of course planning for the return of the papacy to Rome, stressing in his propaganda the importance of the Eternal City. An echo of this may be the growing interest in the history and topography of Rome as a city in humanist writings, an interest that again is reflected also in the humanists' work on Plutarch: Lapo da Castiglione (1406–1438), for instance, dedicated translations of lives of early Roman kings and statesmen to important members of the Curia: *Publicola* to Cardinal Giordano Orsini (c. 1435) and *Romulus*, together with *Theseus*, to Cardinal Prospero Colonna (1436; Pade (2007) 1, ch. 7.9).

The majority of Plutarch's *Lives* had been translated into Latin by the end of the 1430s, and eventually scholarly work on Plutarch was directed toward making the entire corpus of *Lives* accessible in that language. Many manuscripts now contain large collections of the Latin *Lives* and c. 1458 Piero de' Medici commissioned a complete collection from the Florentine *cartolai* Vespasiano da Bisticci. Piero's collection is now Mss. Laur. lat. 65, 26–27 in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, and in order to produce it some *Lives* still had to be translated, namely *Agis and Cleomenes* by Alamanno Rinuccini and *Demetrius and Alcibiades* by Donato Acciaiuoli (Pade (2007) 1, ch. 8). Then, in the spring of 1470, the *Lives* were printed in Rome by Giovanni Antonio Campano (HC *13125); the edition became the basis for nine incunabula and innumerable sixteenth-century editions (Giustiniani (1961)).

Plutarch's reception in Renaissance Italy mainly reveals itself through the many translations, but these are not the only indications of his influence. Though writers found it difficult to imitate Plutarch's biographical style in detail, as may be seen in Bruni's *Vite di Dante e Petrarca* (see above) or Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti* (1438), we do find imitations of his comparative form. Apart from Bruni's Italian lives, Gianozzo Manetti's *Vitae Socratis et Senecae* (c. 1440; recent edition in Manetti (2003)) should be mentioned and Donato Acciaiuoli's *Vitae Hannibalis et Scipionis* (1467; Affortunati and Scardigli (1992)), all regularly copied and printed together with the Latin translations of Plutarch's *Lives*. The *Moralia* largely enjoyed a separate fortune from that of the *Lives*. In general the two corpora were neither translated nor transmitted together. At least in the earlier generations there was a marked preference for the *Lives*, whereas the *Moralia* were often seen as supplements to them. A good example of this is the *De Alexandri virtute aut fortuna*, twice translated in the first half of the century and often transmitted together with the life of Alexander. Most of the earliest translations from the *Moralia* are in fact of *opuscula* concerned with the same themes that we find in the *Lives*, that is the description of character and personality (Becchi (2009)).

Through his work, not least the *Lives*, Plutarch became an exponent of the view that Greece and Rome were culturally compatible. His works quickly became standard reading for the cultured elite throughout the Roman Empire, and his fame was such that a variety of works were attributed to him. He was admired through all the centuries of the Byzantine Empire, but practically unknown in the Latin West. However, with the revival of interest in Greek in Italy around 1400, the *Lives* became some of the most popular Greek texts, first in Italy and then in the rest of Europe. His biographical form was imitated, and the *Lives* were used for example by Shakespeare as sources for his Roman tragedies. From the Middle Ages onwards, the *Moralia* never received quite the same attention as the *Lives* and their reception evolved along different lines.

NOTES

- 1 For further bibliography on the authors mentioned in this section, see Pade (2007) 1, ch. 1.
- 2 English translation by George Long, Internet Classics Archive, classics.mit.edu.
- 3 Ziegler (1951) c. 952; Hunger (1959) 139–142; Garzya (1998) 16–18.
- 4 Plutarchus (1795–1800), vol. I, xli ff. and vol. V, no. xlviii, followed with considerable caution by Ziegler (1951) cc. 824–825.
- 5 For further bibliography on the authors mentioned in this section, see Pade (2007) ch. 2.2.
- 6 Petrarca (1933–1942) *Ep.* XXIV, 5.3; for other passages where Petrarch refers to Plutarch, see Pade (2007) 1.68–72.
- 7 Salutati (1891–1911) 2.480–483; DiStefano (1968) 40–55, with the edition of the text, pp. 134–170; Weiss (1977) 207–218.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For an extensive recent account of Plutarch's early reception through the Italian Renaissance see Pade (2007).

CHAPTER 37

The Renaissance in France

Amyot and Montaigne

Olivier Guerrier

1. The First Translations and Editions of Plutarch's Works (Fifteenth–Sixteenth Centuries)

Some of the first Latin translations of Plutarch's works appeared in Italy, for the most part in manuscript form, as early as the fifteenth century. Most prominent among these are the *Lives*, especially the Roman *Lives*. Beginning with Campano's 1470 Roman edition, a half a dozen or so complete Latin translations of the *Lives* were also published before the Florentine editor Junta published the first complete Greek edition, based on two manuscripts from Florence. Two years later, in 1519, Aldus Manutius procured an edition of the *Lives* which François Asulinus had prepared for him using different manuscripts and which followed the chronological order of the Roman *Lives*. This marked the completion of Manutius' edition of Plutarch's works, begun in 1509 with his publication of the *Moralia*, overseen by Demetrius Ducas and completed with the help of Erasmus and Girolamo Aleandro.

Several printers in Basel also published editions of Plutarch's works during the Renaissance. Bebel published an edition of the *Lives* in 1533, Jérôme Froben and Nicolas Episcopius published the Basel edition of Plutarch's *Moralia* from which Amyot would later work in 1542, and in 1574, Xylander published a Greek edition of which some of the conjectures already figured in his 1570 Latin translation. Xylander also informs us in the preface to his Greek edition that he himself authored a number of the conjectures which he could not find in the manuscripts. In the meantime, Henri Estienne had published in 1572 his influential complete edition of Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* in Geneva. Estienne altered the order of Plutarch's essays somewhat and made corrections based partly on other manuscripts, and partly on those made by scholars in the margins of their personal copies of Plutarch's works.

Thanks to advances in printing, these successive editions encouraged the appropriation of a body of material that had always been composed of disparate pieces and which had, originally, satisfied the different expectations readers had regarding Plutarch. This was especially true of the *Moralia*. On the one hand, each complete edition lent new contemporary relevance to the *Moralia*, as evinced by a surge of Latin translations of isolated or select groups of essays (for example, those by Budé, Regius, and Erasmus, then, after 1542, those by Turnèbe and Du Ferron, who was assisted by La Boétie). On the other hand, the numerous complete editions of Plutarch's works also gave rise to a slightly different, though similarly important, practice: a somewhat holistic approach to editing that better reflected the desire to restore a literary heritage faithfully. Thus, Plutarch's reception during the Renaissance attests to the complementary perspectives of approaching a corpus as a whole and through its constitutive parts, perhaps more so even than other more "doctrinaire" or evidently systemic works. In addition to the contemporary relevance that informs these complete editions of Plutarch's works, the image of the author himself is similarly impacted. Plutarch takes on a persona adapted to his readers' world, alongside the image of Plutarch the philosopher "of everyday life," or at least of ordinary life (see Cazes (2008)).

2. Amyot's Plutarch and His Readership

It would not be an exaggeration to give Amyot's translation a privileged place in the reception of Plutarch's works in France. Indeed, Amyot's efforts yielded the most accomplished vernacular version (in early modern French) of Plutarch's works. He began translating the *Parallel Lives* in 1547 at the request of François I, working primarily from Alde's 1519 edition and manuscripts located in the Vatican library and the library of Venice, which he visited from 1548 to 1552. In the note to the reader with which Amyot prefaces his *Vies des hommes illustres grecs et romains comparées l'une avec l'autre par Plutarque de Chéronée traduites du grec au français*, published in 1559 by Vascosan in Paris, he addresses the corrections he incorporated into Plutarch's text based on his collation of variant readings in the manuscripts, and his efforts to adapt Plutarch's style to the French language. In addition to this, Amyot, the "*sçavant traducteur*" (scholarly translator), includes a discussion on the methods of writing history and, in the spirit of Plutarch's *Vies*, on the distinction between history and *bios*. Amyot conceives of history as "the ordered narrations of notable events, words, and deeds," "a painting that represents the mores of foreign nations, ancient laws and customs, the ambitions of certain men, their council and endeavors [...] and their behavior when they have reached the height of their lives or the lowest point of misfortune." History is more effective than books on "moral philosophy" with their "arguments and ratiocinations," truer than the "inventions and compositions of poetry," more honest and "sweet" than "laws and civil edicts." It is on this basis that Amyot distinguishes between history and *bios*, the second being "more domestic," more focused on "that which derives from within man."

The initial publication of the *Vies*, as well as their subsequent re-editions in 1565, 1567, and the posthumous edition of 1619, was immensely successful. This encouraged Amyot to take on the corpus of Plutarch's *Moralia*, with which he was familiar, having completed a manuscript translation of the essay "On Garrulousness" in 1542. From

1565 to 1572, Amyot filled the margins of his copy of the 1542 Basel edition with copious annotations and, in 1572, published the *Œuvres morales et meslées* in two in-folio volumes, once again with Vascosan. Even more so than the *Vies*, the *Œuvres morales et meslées* raise the question of the order in which Amyot presents the constitutive pieces of Plutarch's work. In effect, Amyot does not consistently follow the arrangement adopted in previous editions. For example, he places the first three pedagogical essays in positions 33 through 35, while Alde and Estienne number them 15–17. Moreover, the overarching coherence of the *Œuvres morales et meslées* is only partially elucidated by the titular distinction between “moral” and “various” (*meslées*), as if this were of secondary importance and the work need not be read in a linear fashion. In fact, in his dedication to Charles IX, Amyot says nothing of the order he gives to Plutarch's essays and dialogues. He does, however, return to several aspects previously addressed in his preface to the *Vies*, for example, the parallels between himself and Plutarch, and between the king and Trajan. At the same time, Amyot praises books of “moral philosophy” which, like religious works, seek to render men virtuous, but which employ “diverse means” rather than the fear of God to do so.

Amyot's editorial presence in the *Œuvres morales et meslées* reflects an interest in philology and the desire to make Plutarch's works available to a broad audience of non-specialists. While he offers relatively few cultural notes or comments on his manner of translation, at the beginning or end of an essay he frequently includes precise information regarding the textual lacunae he encountered, and occasionally calls attention to the discursive or generic specificity of certain passages, identifying for example declamatory speeches and emblematic devices (*devis*). For Amyot, moral philosophy signifies within a formal context. As for his translation, in addition to accommodating ancient *realia* to modern tastes and life, it also conveys, through editorial choices such as omissions or additions, the nuances certain notions take on at different times in history (Margolin (1986)).

As in the case of the *Vies*, Amyot's *Œuvres morales et meslées* were reprinted on several occasions: in 1574, 1575, 1581, and 1618. The 1574 reprint is composed of six in-octavo volumes, the format used at the time for popular literature. There remains some doubt as to the authenticity of the 1618 edition, established by Claude Morel, because it contains eight folios of essays that were not present in the last edition printed during Amyot's lifetime: a translation of *On Rivers* now considered to be spurious, excerpts from *Sur l'âme*, taken from Olympiodorus, and Stobaeus' fragments on love. Moreover, Amyot had changed the title of his 1581 edition to *Œuvres morales et philosophiques*.

Despite the incomparable quality and popularity of Amyot's translation, it would be inaccurate to conclude from them that there existed a uniform portrait of Plutarch's readers during the French Renaissance. In addition to those authors who, like Erasmus, Rabelais, and La Boétie, read Plutarch in the Greek, there were many others who read only parts of his works or focused on one or another isolated aspect of them. Such is the case, for example, with Bodin's interest in their encyclopedic qualities and political themes, and Guazzo's interest in their civil and ethical dimensions (Desideri (2008); Panichi (2008)). This variety of Renaissance readers and readings of the *Œuvres morales et meslées* stems in part from the subtle relationship between the work's constitutive parts and its whole. As for Amyot's *Vies*, the heroic model they offer is discernable in Brantôme's works, and they also influenced works belonging to the *bios* genre, as well as the tragedies of Jodelle, Garnier, and A. Hary (see Lavoine (1986)).

It is Montaigne, however, who stands out among Amyot's readers. Montaigne knew Amyot personally and praises his translation of Plutarch's works most enthusiastically in the fourth chapter of Book II of the *Essais* (Guerrier (2004a)). In effect, he culls passages from Plutarch – whom Montaigne insists is made a Frenchman by Amyot's translations – over five hundred times, and uses the *Vies*, Plutarch's characteristic "comparisons," and the *opuscula* to various ends (see Konstantinovic (1988); Guerrier (2004b)). Thus, while Plutarchan inquiries and anecdotes permeate the *Essais*, Plutarch's works are also fundamental to Montaigne in shaping several decisive aspects of his own book. Among these are Montaigne's reflections on "moral science" in chapter II, 10 "On Books," on his invention of the *essai*, largely informed by his daily readings of the *Vies* (I, 50 "On *Democritus* and *Heraclitus*"), and on the affinity he recognizes between certain disconcerting trains of thought or the suggestive language of the *Œuvres morales et meslées* and his own writing (III, 9 "On Vanity"; I, 26 "On the Education of Children"; III, 13 "On Experience"). As a thinker more given to inquiry than instruction ("enquerant plustost qu'instruisant"), Plutarch helps Montaigne to restore the natural dignity of animals, to represent the limits of human knowledge, to redefine the notion of what is "possible" (II, 32 "Defense of Seneca and Plutarch"), and to envisage a grasping of worldly contingencies and the human subjects submerged by them – in particular at the end of III, 9 "On Vanity" and II, 12 "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," the last of which paraphrases entire passages of Plutarch's essay *On the E in Delphi* (Pouilloux (2001) and (2008)).

Several authors outside of France later followed Amyot's lead. In 1598 Antonio Gandino published a complete translation of the *Opuscules* in Venice, which was followed in 1603 by that of Philemon Holland, published in London. However, it is above all North's 1579 translation that best illustrates the breadth of Amyot's influence to the extent that he worked directly from the French text. It was probably from North's translation that Shakespeare gleaned the subjects and entire scenes for his *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*, capitalizing on a dramatic potential which North emphasizes more so than his predecessor (Worth (1986)).

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See Guerrier (2012) for further information on this topic.

CHAPTER 38

The Reception of Plutarch in France after the Renaissance

Françoise Frazier

The reception of Plutarch's works in France has been profoundly influenced by Jacques Amyot's (1513–1593) translations of the *Parallel Lives* (*Vies des hommes illustres*, 1559) and the *Moralia* (*Œuvres morales et meslées*, 1572), which he continued to revise until his death. Amyot's final, posthumous version of the *Moralia* and the *Lives* appeared in 1618 and 1619, respectively. Being the most accomplished, and perhaps the most frequently published, version of Plutarch's works in early modern French, Amyot's translations are as important for their role in establishing the literary credentials of the French language as for providing a survey of ancient Greco-Roman moral and religious thought, two important factors in the development of French classicism. Amyot's Plutarch also provided the Calvinist pastor Simon Goulart (1543–1628) with the basis for his "pirated" editions (*contrefaçons*) of the *Moralia* (1581) and the *Parallel Lives* (1583), both of which were reprinted on numerous occasions throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. The copious summaries, notes, and other paratextual material with which Goulart accompanied his editions confer on Plutarch's works a logic that is not necessarily that of the Greek author. The result is something of a "moralized Plutarch," whom Goulart portrays in the preface to his 1587 edition of the *Lives* as "a learned and grave historian, suited to condemning before God and mankind those who lead disorderly lives" (Carabin (2003)). Goulart's editorial influence, along with the numerous complete and partial editions of Plutarch's works, including *trésors* or compilations, effectively anchor these in the life of seventeenth-century France (Frazier (2006)). Because Plutarch's works lent themselves to the times so well, he came to be known as a philosopher of everyday life and a model of the congenial sociability espoused by the bourgeoisie, "that old philosopher" whose works Chrysale uses to press his collars in Molière's *Learned Ladies* (1672). But Plutarch also shaped some of the most "modern" works of the seventeenth century, bestowing the authority of antiquity on a new way of feeling and

thinking that would last “until the society born of the political and industrial revolutions rendered these obsolete” (Sirinelli (2000) 241).

1. From Classicism to the Enlightenment

After the torments of the Wars of Religion, when France and perhaps all of Europe were undergoing tremendous change, this “seventeenth-century Plutarch” represented a new approach to matters both spiritual and social. His religious philosophy offered a form of spirituality that was at once exalted and tempered, fervent yet peaceful. Known by many for his supposed relationship with the emperor Trajan, Plutarch also offered the seventeenth century a conception of society built on humanity and an understanding of others, and which valorized civic and social responsibility. Thus, Nicolas Faret (1596–1646) found in Plutarch’s works one of the major sources for building the new worldly ideal showcased in his *Honest Man or The Art of Pleasing at Court* (1630).

Plutarch’s influence is also discernable in two of the major literary genres of the seventeenth century: dramatic tragedy and the novel. Already in the sixteenth century he had inspired the first humanist tragedy, Jodelle’s (1532–1573) *Cléopâtre captive* (1553), in response to which Garnier (1545–1590) wrote his *Marc-Antoine* (1578) a quarter of a century later. During the seventeenth century, an even larger number of dramatic works bear the stamp of Plutarch’s historical biographies, including Hardy’s (1570–1632) *Coriolanus* and the great Corneille’s *Sertorius* (1662), *Othon* (1664), and *Agésilas* (1666). Moreover, the imposing figures of the Fronde (1648–1653) can be said to reflect the heroic model embodied by the women of Plutarch’s *Mulierum virtutes*, which also inspired a number of plays from 1590 to 1661, such as Hardy’s *Timoclée ou la Juste vengeance* (1615), Rotrou’s *Crisante* (1639), taken from Plutarch’s story of Chiomara, and Thomas Corneille’s *Camma, Reine de Galatie* (1664). Not least of all, Racine, who was determined to surpass the tragic figures with which Corneille had won his reputation, identifies Plutarch as a source for his *Mithridate* (1673). Plutarch’s works exercised a comparable influence on seventeenth-century novels. Some of the most prominent novelists, such as Honoré d’Urfé (1567–1625) and Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701), as well as lesser known authors such as Mme de Villedieu (1640–1683), created characters “inspired by the heroes of Plutarch’s *Lives* and the moral ideals represented in his *Moralia*” (Paci (2012)). It is remarkable that Plutarch’s works elicit unanimously favorable responses from a very diverse readership. For instance, the great Condé carried a copy of the *Lives* with him to battle, Madame de Sévigné writes of Plutarch in her *Letters*, Madame de Maintenon recalls having read him as a child, and Racine recommends his works to the king as a worthy distraction from illness.

At the same time, because Plutarch’s works contributed to the nascent idea of classicism, they also came under fire during the successive standoffs between the Ancients and the Moderns. This is true as much for their content as for the outdated style of Amyot’s translations. André Dacier’s (1651–1722) 1721 translation of the *Lives* is a case in point. Dacier – whose wife, Anne, played a central role in the “Querelle d’Homère,” the second phase of the battle between Ancients and Moderns (1710s) – describes Plutarch’s historical biographies in his preface as “a book for all men, of all times,” where “everything comes alive” and where “one can see and hear the great men of history

themselves, rather than merely read about them.” While Dacier’s work attests to a continued admiration for Plutarch’s portrayal of historical figures, he also criticizes Amyot’s translations for being “careless, old-fashioned, and entirely inadequate,” even morally dangerous as some of the terms Amyot uses had acquired a certain indecency. “Impermanence,” Dacier concludes, “is the fate of all modern languages,” an observation Voltaire reiterates later in his entry on the French language for the *Encyclopedie*, where he describes it as being “very rich in burlesque and naïve expressions, and very lacking in noble and harmonious terms.”

The agreement with the most lively and “modern” thought also subsided. Without question Plutarch’s works remained an important element of education: Charles Rollin (1661–1741), the most prominent pedagogue of the times, considered Plutarch to be “infinitely greater than all other historians,” and likens reading the *Lives* to visiting Athens for the way Plutarch “places us in the presence of the great men whose lives he relates, and gives us such a captivating account of their character and behavior it is as if we had lived and conversed with them ourselves.” Rollin’s appreciation of Plutarch resembles Dacier’s: when praising him, both authors seem to be remembering the famous preface to his *Life of Aemilius Paulus*. The abbot Mably shows a similar spirit of kinship with Plutarch’s works in his treatise *Phocion’s Conversations, or the Relation Between Morality and Politics* (1763), which is largely inspired by the *Life of Phocion*. It is very likely that the philosopher P. Bayle (1647–1706) also turned to the *Lives*, a common source of *exempla* at the time, as well as to Plutarch’s essay *On Superstition*, when composing his *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* (1682). Finally, Montesquieu (1689–1755) possessed no fewer than seven editions of Plutarch’s works in his library in La Brède and in his *Pensées* readily alludes to Plutarch, whom he describes as perhaps the only Greek writer whose mind was on a par with that of Roman authors (*Pensée* 251; see also 607, 665, 698, 1521). Montesquieu quotes from Plutarch’s essay *That a Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power* in the first note to the first paragraph of his *Spirit of Laws* (1748) – “Law, says Plutarch, is the Queen of all, mortals and immortals alike” – and brandishes this same “pagan” declaration against his ecclesiastical critics in the *Defense of the Spirit of Laws* (1750). Over time, however, references to Plutarch became increasingly sporadic. Just as the approach to history occasioned by the *Lives* lost influence shortly after the Revolution, so too Plutarch’s approach to moral philosophy fell out of favor among the rationalists of the French Enlightenment. Diderot, for instance, gives a clearly unfavorable verdict on Plutarch’s essays and dialogues in his entry on morals for the *Encyclopedie*, where he asserts that, in general, the Greek author treats his subjects only superficially.

2. Plutarch in the Eighteenth Century: Civic Duty, Aesthetic Sensibility, and Revolutionary Fervor

As was the case for seventeenth-century authors such as Descartes and Pascal, Plutarch was of little interest to philosophers of the French Enlightenment. His works, however, take on a new resonance with eighteenth-century moral and aesthetic sensibilities. Somewhat like Montaigne in the sixteenth century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) stands out among his contemporaries as one of Plutarch’s most dedicated admirers. Rousseau

cultivated a lifelong dialogue with Plutarch in which the Greek author held the role of “master and consoler” and exercised a “modern influence” over Rousseau (*Letter to Madame d’Epinay* (1754); Guichet (2012)). Plutarch also enabled Rousseau to maintain a sense of perspective, the better to reflect on his relationship with his times and himself. For Rousseau, the citizen of Geneva, the *Lives* constitute the first and last of the works that shaped his thought. Closely tied to the memory of his father, with whom Rousseau read the *Lives* at night, Plutarch’s historical biographies are an inalienable part of his personal and intellectual identity. They are discernable in Rousseau’s earliest works, such as the prosopopoeic character of Fabricius in the *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* with which Rousseau first made a name for himself in 1750. Rousseau also alludes to Plutarch in the dedication of his *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1755) when recalling the works he read as a child and the years during which “was formed that free, unwavering, republican mind and character of one rejecting the yoke and servitude.” Over the years, Plutarch continued to shape Rousseau’s thought as well as his personality (Lepan 2012). We encounter the Greek author once again in *Emile* (1762), when Rousseau reflects on pedagogy and emphasizes the importance of giving education a concrete and persuasive dimension, which he also echoes in the *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, composed during the last two years of his life. More remarkably still, in this “story of [his] soul” which is the *Reveries*, Rousseau more or less “appropriates” Plutarch’s essay *How to Profit by One’s Enemies* in composing the Fourth Walk (Grossel (2006)).

As characteristic as this encounter of minds may seem of Rousseau’s own persona, it also reflects the “unexpected conjunction between a text, albeit didactic though moderately so, and a moment in history when everything from sentimental life to the lessons of history is infused with political passion” (Sirinelli (2000) 464). On the one hand, Plutarch inspired the new sensibilities characteristic of the eighteenth-century novel and exemplified by the works of Bernardin de Saint Pierre (1737–1814), a friend of Rousseau, and Choderlos de Laclos (1741–1803), who recommends reading Plutarch in his treatise *On the Education of Women*. On the other hand, Plutarch’s works also played a part in the fervor surrounding the Revolution, inspiring the Girondin mastermind Manon Roland (1754–1793) as well as the Jacobins during the Reign of Terror (Avocat (2012)). At that time, readers turned to Plutarch in search of a kind of regenerative model and it was as if the parallel construction of his *Lives* signified an invitation for revolutionaries to model themselves after his ancient historical figures. Brutus and the Gracchi were particularly popular. In the *Old Cordelier*, Camille Desmoulins likens Hébert’s actions to Drusus’ exaggerated behavior, while on August 2, 1793, the Convention issued a decree ordering that “the great republican tragedies, such as *Brutus*, *William Tell*, and *Caius Gracchus* be staged three times a week” for one month in Paris. Thus, in 1792, Marie-Joseph Chénier (1764–1811) staged a tragedy in three acts modeled on *Caius Gracchus* and one entitled *Timoléon* in 1794, after having attempted an unsuccessful adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* entitled *Brutus et Cassius ou les derniers Romains* in 1790. In addition to the “men of the Revolution,” as Jean Jaurès writes in the introduction to his *Socialist History of the French Revolution*, “who read Plutarch’s *Lives*” and drew from these “their admirable surges of inner strength,” the entire Neoclassical movement beginning in the mid-eighteenth century can be said to have recognized itself in Plutarch’s works. Indeed, Jean-Louis David (1748–1825), one of the greatest painters of the times, is known to have proclaimed, “Let no one enter who has not read Plutarch.” David’s *Antiochus and*

Stratonice won the *prix de Rome* in 1774, and one of his masterpieces, *The Sabines* (1799), depicts the eponymous women's reconciliatory intervention between Romans and Sabines. Such widespread enthusiasm for Plutarch's works gave rise to another important complete translation. The abbot Ricard published the *Moralia* from 1783 to 1795, and the *Lives* from 1798 to 1803. Ricard's motive was to give a version of Plutarch's works that "conjoined precision and loyalty, a freer gait less bound to the form and turns of the Greek language, and which, by shortening Plutarch's characteristically long phrases, would bring more precision and clarity, more elegance and taste." Plutarch, it appears, continued to play a role in the evolution of the French literary style.

3. Plutarch's Fading Influence: From the Restoration to World War I

In a sense, Napoleon could be considered the last of history's Plutarchan heroes. The heroic grandeur of Plutarch's illustrious subjects, his own sense of civic virtue and measured disposition are hardly consonant with Romantic individualism and passion. Moreover, the bourgeoisie's fascination with positivism and scientific reasoning made it dismissive of Plutarch's interest in religion and eschatology, while German historiography attacked the reliability of Plutarch's documentation. The last of Plutarch's enthusiastic readers from the nineteenth century appear in the 1820s, though their admiration is reminiscent of earlier times. Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) holds forth the image of Plutarch he finds in the essay *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance* in opposition to the Plutarch tailored to suit the revolutionary ideals of his adversaries. Maistre's Plutarch derives from his numerous readings a translation/adaptation of this essay, or "theodicy" as he called it, published in 1816 (Asencio Sánchez (2006)). The expanded passages of this version, which were inspired by Christian doctrine and can be said to amplify ideas sketched out by Plutarch, are methodically presented and offer coherent discussions of matters such as moral order, the opposition of vice and virtue, and the role of Providence (Frazier (2012); Rohrbasser (2012)). Jules Michelet (1798–1874), who chose to present on the *Lives* when sitting for his literary exams in 1819, represents an entirely different perspective. In his doctoral thesis "Examen des Vies des hommes illustres," Michelet, like Dacier, Rollin, or Rousseau in his *Emile*, extols Plutarch's ability to infuse ancient civilizations and historical figures with life. More importantly, Plutarch's biographies enable the future French historian to shape some of his own fundamental ideas, namely, that history itself is a character, or living entity, and that the historian's goal must be to bring it fully into being.

There is no denying, however, that at the time Plutarch's influence was in decline. Despite the fact that Victor Bétolaud published a new translation of Plutarch's complete works in 1870, these were gradually relegated to the classroom. In fact, from the middle of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century, Plutarch's name was used as a generic term to refer to all manner of biographical dictionaries (Pascal (2012)). Moreover, from 1860 to 1914, the heroic model associated with Plutarch's name came to elicit a certain degree of disenchantment which, in the years following World War I, took the form of open hostility. The journalist Jean de Pierrefeu's (1883–1940) vehement polemic against the French military authorities offers a case in point. Having served as

a second-lieutenant to the army's General Headquarters, Pierrefeu wrote a series of works detailing his wartime experience in an attempt to dissociate himself from what he considered to be "official" history. One piece, entitled *Plutarch Lied* (1923), offers a fictitious dialogue between the author and his daemon, a personification of conformism. This blatantly incendiary work elicited an official response on behalf of the army – *Plutarch Did Not Lie* (1923) – to which Pierrefeu replied with his *Anti-Plutarch* (1925) and *Plutarch's New Lies* (1931). In a sense, then, Plutarch remained a meaningful cultural reference, even though he played only a secondary role in denouncing an infatuation for greatness perceived by some as promoting a form of social travesty.

4. A Renewed Interest in Biography

The fact that Plutarch had as much of a symbolic place in postwar polemic underscores how different the cultural context of those times was to that of later generations of readers. In effect, in subsequent years Plutarch would become a minor figure in the increasingly specialized field of Hellenist studies. Academic interest in the Late Classical period did, however, lead to the publication of another, more scholarly, complete edition of Plutarch's works in the Collection Universitaire de France, which was followed by a study of Plutarch and his works by Jean Sirinelli, published in the Fayard series of biographies. This volume, intended for a somewhat larger audience, responded to a renewed interest in the *bios* genre. Historians, for instance, no longer partisan to the *Annales* school of history, had begun once again to explore the use of anecdote as well as the role of chance and individual personalities. At the same time, novelists were faced with the related crises surrounding the literary hero and literary exemplarity, both of which have paved the way for reinterpreting and subverting the Plutarchan model, as well as introducing the notion that seemingly trivial matters can be invested with real literary value. Pierre Michon's *Minuscule Lives* (1984), an obvious play on Plutarch's *Vies des hommes illustres*, is emblematic of Plutarch's place in the appeal of biography among contemporary readers. Michon's collection of eight stories, in which he endeavors to capture the ordinary lives of his ancestors and childhood acquaintances, has garnered considerable critical attention from literary scholars today (Demanze (2007)).

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No single comprehensive monograph on this vast subject exists. Guerrier (2012) constitutes a pioneering work in the field and brings together in one volume a series of individual studies that supersede the sparse prior works on the topic. The volume is divided into seven sections that indicate the extent of Plutarch's influence: "Variations philosophiques au XVII^e s.," "Plutarque et la Tragédie," "Le Plutarque des Dames," "Usages, traductions et éditions (XVII^e–XVIII^e s.)," "Plutarque dans les débats philosophiques du XVIII^e s.," "Révolution et Contre-révolution," and "Perspectives européennes et modernes."

CHAPTER 39

The Reception of Plutarch in Spain

Aurelio Pérez Jiménez

The reception of Plutarch in Spain has experienced some significant as well as other less glorious times. The value of Plutarch's work was discovered during the Spanish Golden Age in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At the time there were no Greek editions of his works in Spain, although they were read in universities and translated into Spanish. Thanks to such translations, Spanish humanists were able to read Plutarch's works in Castilian Spanish or Latin; consequently his influence was felt in moral and theological treatises and in literary works such as biographies, apophthegms, moral dialogues, miscellaneous works, essays with a philosophical or political intent, and collections of emblems.

The eighteenth century was in some way a continuation of the seventeenth; at this time Plutarch's influence was felt in essays, speeches, novels, and neoclassical theater. Despite such intellectuals as Feijoo and Jovellanos, who were more fascinated by the French Enlightenment and advocated the study of the French language rather than Greek and Latin, the presence of Plutarch did not suffer significantly. In fact his popularity among French thinkers and writers, especially Montaigne, helped contribute to the influence of such works as the *Moralia* and his biographies. During the eighteenth century the popularity of the *Parallel Lives* was fueled by an overall fondness for historical theater with Greco-Roman themes. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the dissemination of Plutarch's works reached a milestone with the publication of the first full Spanish translation of the *Parallel Lives* by Ranz Romanillos. At the end of the previous century interest in historical heroes from antiquity in Spain was not very different from the interest shown in France and the Americas, where the paradigmatic roles of Plutarch's characters exerted a great influence in the American and French revolutions.

By the nineteenth century, Spanish humanists without classical training were able to read translations of Plutarch's work in their own language as well as in Latin, French, and English. Those few who were able to understand Greek, like Gregorio Mayans, Valera,

or Menéndez y Pelayo, used Plutarch's works for fictional recreations, essays, literary criticism, or simply as a source for their philological and historical research. To a greater or lesser extent, Plutarch's works would later become an inspiration for political essays and oratory while maintaining the impact they had had on historical novels. During the last years of the nineteenth century, it is possible to see traces of Plutarch's work leaving their mark in *costumbrismo*, a trend in Spanish literature that emphasized the depiction of everyday manners and customs in a particular social or provincial milieu, and in satire. This by no means made Plutarch a household name, however.

During the first half of the twentieth century the reading of Plutarch's work was well documented among some members of the Generation of '27, an influential group of poets that arose among Spanish literary circles between 1923 and 1927, essentially out of a shared desire to experience and work with avant-garde forms of art and poetry. However, it is more difficult to trace Plutarch's influence on poetry than on other forms of literature. The most significant acknowledgment of his influence came from the Generation of '98, also called the Generation of 1898, which was a group of novelists, poets, essayists, and philosophers active in Spain at the time of the Spanish–American War (1898). Nevertheless, it was during times of political and cultural conflict that the strength of Plutarch's influence in biographies, theater, and historical novels could be seen. Educational investment in the classics and the teaching of ancient cultures at universities were factors that spread the knowledge of Plutarch amongst the masses. Now his original texts were being reread with a critical and laicizing eye, perhaps as a reaction against the ideological rigidity emanating from the administrative structures of the political regime. Consequently, Plutarch even entered secondary school Greek studies in the middle of the 1960s.

Finally, at the end of the twentieth century, Spain joined the global Plutarchan movement that started in the United States, resulting in the creation of the International Plutarch Society (IPS). Thanks to the Spanish branch of IPS, Plutarch has entered into a second Golden Age that in some ways has surpassed the achievements of his works during the Renaissance. His works are read, analyzed, discussed, edited, and retranslated, gathering sufficient clout to inspire theater, novels, essays, and also poetry.

In this chapter I discuss the stages of different literary genres and how Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* were perceived and imitated. However, the analysis is restricted to discussing Spaniards within the confines of present-day Spain, that is to say, Spaniards born in the Iberian Peninsula excluding Portugal, or in the Balearic and Canary Islands. Consequently, I do not discuss writers or politicians born in Latin America, although Plutarch's influence is exceptionally rich there. Indeed, this is a topic that deserves its own more careful and detailed analysis.

1. The Discovery of Plutarch in Spain

During the Spanish Middle Ages there was very little information about Plutarch available. His name was known in the fourteenth century thanks to Salisbury's *Policraticus*, from which the *Institutio Traiani* presented the emperor as a means of linking Plutarch and Spain (Pérez Jiménez (1990) 229–230; Bergua (1995) 35–94). In addition to this doctrine, we note the mention of Plutarch's name in a poem to Trajan by Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (1370–1460). But what is known as authentic Plutarch comes from information

gleaned during these centuries concerning the *De cohibenda ira*, from which some topics were extracted in Salisbury's book and which Petrarch probably cited from Aulus Gellius.

Apart from the information mentioned above, there is nothing more about Plutarch during this time period. Nevertheless, c. 1380 the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller, Juan Fernández de Heredia, who was interested in classical sources in order to develop the history of Spain, ordered a translation of a selection of the *Parallel Lives* into Aragonese, the language used in the ancient reign of Aragon. This translation, which can now be read in a recently published edition (Álvarez Rodríguez (2009)), was also translated into Italian during the fifteenth century and ran parallel with the Latin version in that century. Fernández de Heredia and other humanists (Redondo and Sancho (2007) 687–694; Redondo (2011)) used the translation for their historiographical works. Because of this, it can be said that the success of the *Parallel Lives* in the fifteenth century was proportional to the enthusiasm for history at that time when Plutarch shared a title of authority with Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, and Cicero. The Castilian Spanish translation of *Parallel Lives* (1491) by Alfonso Fernández de Palencia worked its way throughout Spain, educating all who came across it.

2. Translations of Plutarch's Works into Spanish from 1500 to 2010

With respect to Plutarch's translations, everything that is known about them has been summarized in a recent article by Pérez Jiménez (2009); here I will review only specific names and key dates. Francisco de Enzinas translated the *Lives* as well as several other Plutarchan works, including *Cimon–Lucullus* in 1547, and *Theseus–Romulus*, *Lycurgus–Numa*, *Solon–Publicola*, and *Themistocles–Camillus* in 1551. However, it has yet to be confirmed whether the last two mentioned pieces were translated by Enzinas himself or by Gracián de Alderete (Pérez Jiménez (2011)).

In the seventeenth century only annotated paraphrases of the *Brutus* by Francisco Quevedo (1654) and the *Numa* by Antonio Costa (1693) were published. From that time on, it was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that Ranz Romanillos started Spanish publication of the *Parallel Lives* (1759–1830); this translation and subsequent reprintings were used as the principal text by Spaniards up until the last quarter of the twentieth century, when I myself began a new Spanish translation of Plutarch's works for the Spanish publishing company Gredos.

In the nineteenth century, apart from the translation mentioned above, only one manuscript version of the pseudo-Plutarchan *De placitis philosophorum* by Pedro Estalá (1793) and a *Theseus*, published in 1821 by abbot José Marchena (Asencio Sánchez (2010)), are known. In the twentieth century there was a revival of Spanish translations of Plutarch's works, beginning with Carles Ribas' translation into Catalan for the Bernat Metge Foundation (1926–1946) and concluding with the above-mentioned Gredos translation (1985–2010), carried out by various translators. Critical editions of the Greek text of the *Parallel Lives* in Spanish are still awaiting publication, which it is hoped will be endorsed by the Alma Mater collection.

The *Moralia* have been the most fortunate of Plutarch's works in Spanish on account of moral and theological interests in Spain since the Golden Age of the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries. Gracián de Alderete translated the *Apophthegms* (1533) and *Moralia* (1548, 1571), Alonso Virués Ruiz the *De cupiditate divitiarum* (1538), Diego de Astudilo the *De cohibenda ira* and *Coniugalia praecepta* (1551), and Pedro Simón Abril retranslated some of the *Apophthegms* (1590) (Morales Ortiz (2000) 139–145). A translation of *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* by Gaspar Hernández (c. 1554; Pérez Jiménez (2010b)) was preserved along with another, albeit partial, translation of *De vitando aere alieno* by Juan Páez de Castro (1556). But from the sixteenth century there were no new translations of the *Moralia* into Spanish until the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, when Gredos published all the *Moralia* in new translations by various translators (1984–2004). A critical edition of *De Iside et Osiride* was published by Manuela García Valdés in 1995 in Pisa, and other critical editions were published by D'Auria Editore (Naples) as part of the Italian *Corpus Plutarchi Moralium*: Raúl Caballero's *De exilio* (1995), Esteban Calderón Dorda's *De fluviis* (2003), and Aurelio Pérez Jiménez's *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (2008).

3. Plutarch in Spanish Universities and in Public and Private Libraries

The creation of the first chairs in Greek in Spanish universities at the beginning of the sixteenth century as well as the entry of Plutarch's works in the new curricular programs were undoubtedly responsible, at least in part, for such translation activity. The translations were an important decisive factor in Plutarch's well-earned reputation as a source for Spanish humanists of the Golden Age. In the register for the academic year 1560–1561 at the University of Salamanca, for example, we can see that the curriculum included readings of Plutarch's sentences for the Mungía lectures in June and September. Plutarch also appears as a topic for the academic year 1599–1600 in the Greek classes of Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (known as “El Brocense”); the same is true of the *ratio studiorum* published in 1599 by Aquaviva: here Plutarch's works were a subject in the fourth course of humanities for the Society of Jesus in Spain.

Among grammarians, Francisco Vergara proposed, after the introduction of the Greek language, that students begin to dedicate themselves to “books full of useful content” such as Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia*; Pedro Simón Abril developed a grammar book entitled *Greek Grammar Written in Castilian Spanish* (1587) as well as a syllabus, in which Plutarch received significant mention as a historian and moralist (López Rueda (1973) 247–248). His name appeared later on in other Spanish grammarians' proposals. In the eighteenth century, the Jesuit Francisco Javier de Idiáquez suggested that university students read Plutarch along with other historians such as Thucydides and Xenophon (Hernando (1971) 96–100). Due to the evidence of Plutarch's importance in curricula, his works began to appear in linguistic research and in philological commentaries.

Furthermore, Spanish universities made room for his works to enter public and private libraries (Bergua (1995) 4–9): the inventory of the Prince of Viana Library recorded a “Plutarch” entry, probably referring to some of the Latin volumes of *Lives* bought from Italy (Bergua (1995) 22). In reference to Greek manuscripts of Plutarch, Hernán Núñez “El Pinciano” had two exemplars including some treatises of the *Moralia*, now preserved in the University of Salamanca (Pordomingo (1996) 463); from the nine codices

preserved in the Library of the Escorial, eight arrived during the sixteenth century and the other, number 5, arrived in the seventeenth century (Bergua (1995) 4–5); of the seven volumes in the National Library of Madrid, six (from the Lascaris-Uceda collection) arrived in Madrid around 1696 and entered the library by order of Philip V in 1712; the other (belonging to Francisco de Mendoza Bobadilla) came in the eighteenth century (Bergua (1995) 5); and finally, the manuscript of the *Moralia* preserved in the Cathedral of Toledo was deposited there *c.* 1801 by Archbishop Lorenzana, who received it from the Vatican librarian Francisco Javier de Zelada. Of course, manuscripts with Latin versions of Plutarch's works, incunabula and editions of the Greek text, or Latin and Castilian translations have been found since the sixteenth century in public and private libraries. In accordance with known trends, Plutarch's works were present in the libraries of such humanists as Juan de Vergara and Alonso de Cortona, the Marqués de Velada (teacher of Philip III), Quevedo, Saavedra Fajardo, Lastanosa (a friend of Baltasar Gracián), Banfi y Parrilla (Secretary to Philip V), the first Marqués de Dos Aguas, Trigueros, Meléndez Valdés, Campomanes, Mayans, Menéndez Pelayo, Pardo Bazán, Carles Riba, and Juan Ramón Jiménez.

4. Philological Approaches to Plutarch in Spain

Concerning philological *Commentaries*, Plutarch's name could be read often, for example in Nebrija's *Commentary on Persius* (1503), in Fernando de Herrera's *Edition of Garcilaso* (1580), in Fox Morcillo's *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (1554) (Martínez Benavides (1999) on the last), and in the commentaries (1609) on Vergil's *Eclogues* (Iglesias Montiel (1991)) and *Georgics* (Ortega Castejón (1991)) by Juan Luis de la Cerda (1569–1607). Examples of the presence of Plutarch in Spanish philological activity are abundant; his name reinforced the poetical theory of Francisco de Cascales (1565–1642) (Alemán Illán (2005)) and he was present in Spanish literary criticism over the centuries that followed, for example in the *Poetics* of Ignacio Luzán (1702–1774), who began his work by justifying Plutarch's attacks against poets as a claim for the moral function of poetry. There are other significant examples of philological enthusiasm for Plutarch, as in the commentary and translation into French of the *De sera numinis vindicta* by Marchena (Asencio Sánchez (2006)), but we will limit ourselves to four names: Gregorio Mayans i Siscar (1699–1781), labeled by Campomanes as the “Plutarco español” (Spanish Plutarch); his disciple Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, whose learned works contained several quotations from Plutarch; Carles Ribes, who has carried out intense scholarly activity on Plutarch in Barcelona (Mestre and Gómez (2005)); and Ramón Menéndez Pidal, who often used data from Plutarch's works for his research on the origins of the Spanish language and the history of Spain.

In any case, let us return to the sixteenth century to show evidence of philological attitudes to Plutarch's works in Spain. Antonio Agustín (1516–1586) was a great humanist educated in Salamanca and Bologna, who reached high ecclesiastical positions and was Bishop of Lleida. His abundant productions discussed *inter alia* Roman law, medals and coins, and the history of Roman families, and included many examples revealing a vast knowledge of Plutarch's works; but it is in the *Letters* that he refers to Plutarch with greater spontaneity, discussing, explaining, and even proposing corrections

to several of his Greek passages. More information can be found in Pérez Jiménez (2007). There is no need to do more than highlight his efforts, and those of his friend Juan Núñez, also a humanist, to resolve some interpretative questions concerning the *De defectu oraculorum*, which the Italian scholar Latinio Latini proposed to him in a letter of November 15, 1567. Agustín's answer, dated February 23, 1568, reveals the philological competence of both Spanish humanists, in spite of some rashness on the part of Núñez, also noted by Agustín himself and recognized by Latinio in another letter of April 27 (Pérez Jiménez (2007) 684–686).

5. Plutarch and Spanish Educational Writings

Of course, Plutarch's influence was especially important in the fields of pedagogy, theology, and philosophical and moral thought. Three subjects were the aim of education since the Golden Age, children, women, and politicians, all of whom had a place in the titles of Plutarch's moral treatises. The *De liberis educandis* determined the title of a book by Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1509) and the *Coniugalia praecepta* was of great value as a pattern for his works and for later essays concerning the education of women. Among these essays should be mentioned Luis Vives' *De institutione feminae christianae*, also paralleling *De mulierum virtutibus* (Narro Sánchez (2011)), Friar Luis de Leon's *The Perfect Marriage* (1584), and Pedro de Lujan's *Conversations on Marriage* (1550).

Plutarch's influence was extended directly or by means of these already classical Spanish works into later centuries. Feijoo's *Defense of Women* (1726) owes much of his egalitarian doctrine to Plutarch; and the Chaeronean author's spirit lived on in the first discourses on civil rights in Spain by such women as Josefa Amar y Borbón (*Discourse on the Physical and Moral Education of Women*, 1790), who even mentioned Plutarch's name, and Inés Joyés (*Defense of Women*, 1798).

Finally, we should not forget Plutarch's political treatises, in which he addressed young men and defended the right of old men to take part in politics. These writings, together with Erasmus' *Education of a Christian Prince* (1516), itself inspired by Plutarch, influenced the already well-developed political pedagogy of the Spanish Golden Age. The Valencian disciple of Nebrija, Cosme Damián Cavall, for example, refers to both Plutarch and Erasmus in his 1531 discourse *Oratio parenetica de optimo statu reipublicae constituendo* (Rausell Guillot (2006) 442–449). The Jesuit Rivadeneyra (1527–1611) wrote a treatise directed against Machiavelli on the virtues of the Christian prince (1595) in which he obviously disliked Tacitus because of the identification of his portrait of Tiberius with Machiavelli: on this occasion he drew his arguments from Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch (Antón Martínez (1991)). In the same year the treatise was published, an authentic jewel of erudition also appeared, the *Política para Corregidores* (*Politics for Magistrates*) by Castillo de Bovadilla, the first part of which was full of references to the *Parallel Lives* and the *Moralia*, mainly to the political treatises and collections of apophthegms (Pérez Jiménez (2002) 358–359). The sixteenth-century writer Eugenio Narbona, in his *Civil Political Doctrine Written in Aphorisms* (1621), based his moral instruction for politicians on Plutarch's apophthegms as well as on other Greek and Latin authors. The *Praecepta* was also used by the Marqués de Velada for the education of the

6. Qui fratrē quoque
Neronis Drusū tra-
xit in partes, se ob-
jectā Principis loci.
Tac, lib. 4. ann.

la conveniencia del que procuramos persuadir, intere-
fandole en ellas. Porque todos se mueven por las co-
modidades propias, pocos por sola obligacion, ò glo-
ria. Para incitar Seyano à Druso à la muerte de su her-
mano Neron, le arrojò delante la esperanza del Impe-
rio. 6 La destreza de vn prudente Ministro consiste en
facilitar los negocios con los intereses agenos, dispo-
niendo de suerte el tratado, que estos, i los de su Prin-
cipe vengan à servnos mismos. Querer negociar con
solas conveniencias propias, es subir el agua por
arcaduzes rotos; quando vnos la reciben
de otros, ayudan todos .



TOdas las cosas animadas, ò inanimadas son hojas
deste gran libro del Mundo, obra de la Naturale-
za, donde la Divina Sabiduria escrivìò todas las scien-
cias,

Figure 39.1 Diego Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe político-cristiano representada en cien empresas*, Munich 1640/Milan 1642, p. 284 = *Apophthegmata*. Used by permission of La Real Academia Alfonso el Sabio de Murcia.

future king Philip III (Martínez Hernández (1999) 76); and Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo, in the *Norte de príncipes* (1626), quoted Plutarch's name once and occasionally cited his heroes as examples of good behavior. Francisco de Quevedo Villegas (1580–1645) used him largely in his writings on political instruction and in social satires (Díaz Martínez (2002)); but the most influential author was Diego de Saavedra Fajardo (1584–1648), whose *The Royal Politician represented in One Hundred Emblems* (1640/1642), in spite of critical comment by Gregorio Mayans who preferred *The Literary Republic* (1665), became a European masterpiece of political thought. It is a mixture of books of emblems and political essays (Fig. 39.1) in which Saavedra gives examples from the *Lives* and mentions some treatises from the *Moralia* (Bergua (1995) 33; Pérez Jiménez (2002) 361, (2003a) 232–234, and (2003b) 187–189).

6. Plutarch's Presence in Emblem Collections

This allusion to Saavedra brings us to emblematic literature, a genre between moral, theological, and political instruction and aesthetic that is well represented in Spain. It was created by the Italian scholar and lawyer Alciato and achieved almost immediate popularity throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The genre has a specific structure, consisting of a drawing (*figure*) with an allusive phrase in front (*motto*) and followed by a short explanation, almost always a poetic composition (*epigram*). There are also commentaries explaining the three parts, first referring to Alciato's emblems, then later added by the authors themselves as a fourth element to their own emblems.

Among Alciato's commentaries preserved in Spain, one was by El Brocense (1571) and another by Juan de Valencia (1550), both well known for their erudition and for often quoting Plutarch as a source for their explanations. In respect of the original books of emblems, Plutarch's *Lives* (Pérez Jiménez (2003a)) and *Moralia* (Pérez Jiménez (2003b)) influenced some figures with iconographical motifs, mottos, and epigrams rich in moral doctrine, as can be seen in the figures reproduced here. In relation to these books it would be pertinent to mention the following authors and works: *Moral Impress* (1581) by Juan de Borja (1533), *Moral Emblems* (1589, 1591) by Juan de Horozco y Covarrubias (1589–1608), *Moralized Emblems* (1599) by Hernando de Soto (Fig. 39.2), *Moral Emblems* (1610) by Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Moral and Spiritual Impresses* (1613) by Juan Francisco Villava (Pérez Jiménez (2005)), *Sacred Impresses* (1681, Fig. 39.3) by the Jesuit Francisco Núñez de Cepeda (1616–1690), and *Emblemata centum. Regio politica* (1653, Fig. 39.4) by Juan de Solórzano Pereyra (1575–1655), which includes long commentaries in which the author quotes more than half of the *Lives* and many treatises from the *Moralia* (Pérez Jiménez (2002) 364–365 and (2003c) 389). As part of Plutarch's influence in minor iconography it is also worth mentioning the *Description of the Royal Galley of D. Juan de Austria* by Juan de Mal Lara. This Sevillian humanist, who also commented on Alciato's emblems (Selig (1956)) and quoted Plutarch in other works on popular philosophy, used Plutarch's heroes and themes as examples of war and good governance, for moral education, and even for popular wisdom (Pérez Jiménez (2006) 234–246).

EMBLEMAS

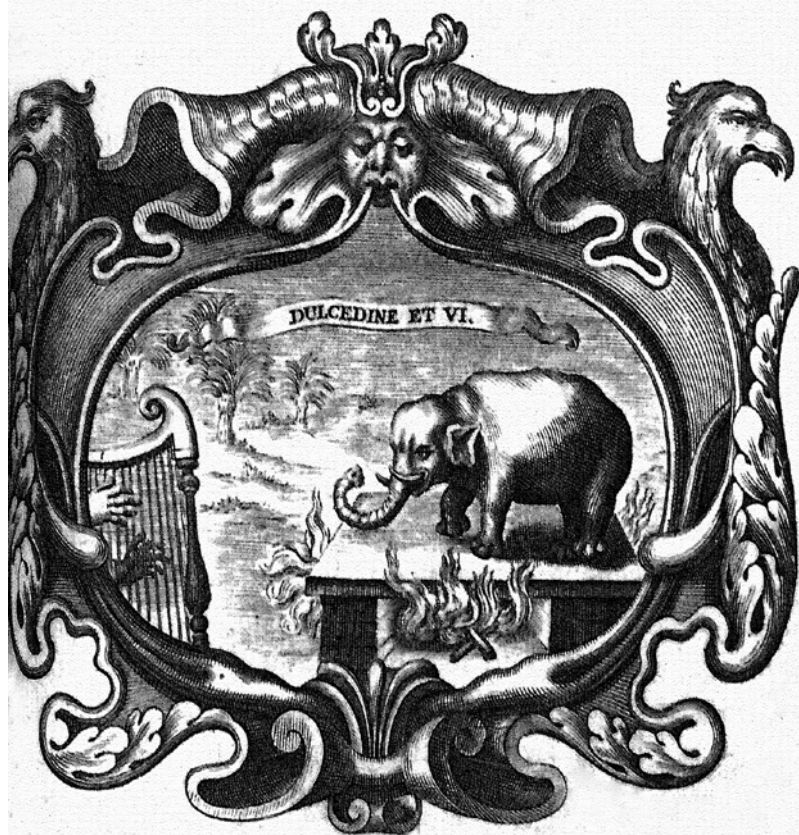
Leuium rerum admirari, indignū est viri,
Indigno es del nombre de hombre
el que de poco se admira.



Admiro, e vn pueblo entero
Con espanto nunca oydo,
De ver rebuelto y asido
A vnallaue vn dra on fiero.
De esso (dixo) os admirays
Leontiquidas, mas podreys,
Quando la llauē que veys,
Rebuelta al dragon veays.

V A.

Figure 39.2 Hernando de Soto, *Emblemas moralizadas*, Madrid 1599, fol. 38v = *De capiēda ex inimicis utilitate*.



EMPRESA XLIV.



NINGUN bruto^r entre los terrestres
 mas corpulento, y difícil de mover,
 que el Elephante, y ninguno mas
 habil, y capaz de disciplina. Llegó
 la industria à enseñarle à dançar ajustado al son
 de un instrumento; en que no sè que mas admi-
 re, la docilidad de el discipulo, ò la destreça de
 la enseñanza! Es la republica un sarao de quen-
 ta bien concertado, cuio primor consiste; en
 que guardando cada uno de los ciudadanos su

r. Quid vastius Ele-
 phanto vel aspectu hor-
 ridius? At hic quoque
 pro ludo est homini, &
 spectaculo celebri tripu-
 diaque, & saltus, & ado-
 rationes discit, *Plutarchi.*
coment. de Fortuna.

Zzzz iij.

Figure 39.3 Francisco Núñez de Cepeda, *Empresas sacras*, Madrid 1681, p. 717 = *De fortuna* 98E.

Figure 39.4 Juan de Solórzano Pereyra, *Emblemata centum*, Madrid 1779, 53, p. 319 = Per. 16.8.

7. Plutarch's Influence on Moral and Philosophical Writings and Essays

As we have suggested with regard to De Mal Lara, the apophthegms of Plutarch (and Erasmus) influenced the abundant proverbial and apophthegmatic literature mainly of the Golden Age; but Plutarch's popularity in Spain had to do especially with moral and theological treatises and philosophical diatribe. Naturally, there were reasons that contributed to the acceptance by the Church of a pagan author such as Plutarch: his conservative Platonic thought, which always advocated divine providence and human responsibility, and the fact that he was read by such Church Fathers as Clement of Alexandria, St. Basil, and St. John Chrysostom. The list of Spanish theologians and moralists who cited the *Moralia* was considerable. Pedro de Valencia (1555–1620) inserted many quotations from Plutarch in his *Academica* (1596), using them to affirm a position against the Stoics (Nieto Ibáñez (2005) 794–795); in his *De arcano* sermon, Arias Montano consciously emulated the symbolic explanations of Plutarch, Horapollo, and Glarean in their works. Furthermore his moral, philosophical, and theological richness made Plutarch a valuable complement for Biblical exegesis and moral teachings. It is apparent that Friar Luis de Granada's *Collectanea moralis philosophiae* (1571) was in part structured to follow the ethical treatises of the *Moralia* (Martins (2011)). In the same way, Lorenzo de Zamora, in the *Mystical Monarchy* (1598 and 1601), used Plutarch as an example in discussing theological and moral questions (Nieto Ibáñez (2007) 649–662) and quoted him frequently (Nieto Ibáñez (2007) 664–668). This intertextual relationship also finds its way into theories expounded by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, a writer who was the target of Quevedo's criticism in the *Perindola*, in his *Moral, Human and Divine Examples, for All People* (1661), which advised preachers to use Seneca and Plutarch for their sermons.

Many other names could be mentioned (see Herrero Salgado (1994)), but it seems more appropriate to recall only two who, by means of the moral content and formal structure of their works, have become classical references for Spanish Plutarchan literature. Cristóbal de Villalón (1510–c.1562) in his *Crotalón* recreates the dialogue between Odysseus and Gryllus from *De bruta ratione uti* (Indelli (1992) 322 and 344–352; Bergua (1995) 196–263); and Luisa Sigea de Velasco (1522–1560) in her *Colloquium de vita privata et aulica* applies Plutarch's dialogical techniques, which have Flaminia and Blesilla reciting complete passages from *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* and from *De adulate et amico*, both taken from Erasmus' translations (Pérez Jiménez (1998) 377–388).

In regard to Spanish essays, Plutarch deserves the acknowledgment he received from the first cultivators of the genre. Ramón Pérez de Ayala (1880–1962) was right to consider the Chaeronean author as an essayist when he wrote an article in the Spanish newspaper *ABC* (August 22, 1932) titled “El buen Plutarco, patriarca de los ensayistas”; on the other hand, the Bishop of Mondoñedo, Friar Antonio de Guevara, prior to the advent of this genre in Spain, not only imitated but even recreated Plutarch by means of fictitious and real references to him (as for example in the *Letters*) (García Gual (1988), (1991), (1998), (2000)). His fallacious quotations can be read largely in famous works such as *Dial of Princes* and *Contempt for the Court*

and *Praise of the Village* (1539), but also in other less important works such as *The Art of Sailing*. This literary license by the Bishop of Mondoñedo, who was mentioned with Plutarch in a well-known passage of the *Quixote* by Cervantes, was severely criticized by Pedro de Rúa (d. 1556), proving that he himself knew Plutarch's works very well. The miscellaneous character of Plutarch's *Moralia* was reproduced in *A Miscellany of Several Lessons* (1540) by Pedro de Mexía (1497–1551), who actively used the *Lives* and *Moralia* for selecting and explaining the topics of his work (Cuartero (1981) 21–74; Cherchi (1993) 54–59). In any case after Guevara, the influence of Montaigne revived the *Lives* and *Moralia* in Spain during the Enlightenment. Francisco de Quevedo, mentioned above, who spoke with admiration of “Miguel Montaña,” used the essay mainly for philosophical and satirical purposes. In one essay, this follower of Seneca and Epictetus defended Stoicism against Plutarch (1634); such an innovative critical attitude was repeated a year later with regard to Epicurus, although here Quevedo was limited to reproducing arguments already used by the Italian Nicola Agelli (Bergua (1995) 30–31).

Another essayist, Baltasar Gracián (1601–1658), cited Plutarch in most of his known works (Bergua (1995) 32), especially in *The Complete Gentleman* (1646), in *Acuteness and Art of Ingenuity* (1648), and in the novel *The Critic* (1651–1657), to which we will return below. Gracián was an enthusiastic follower of the *Parallel Lives*, which he masterfully imitated. Plutarch is not absent from Feijoo (1742–1760) in spite of his preference for modern languages. He referred to him sometimes in his *Erudite and Curious Letters*, which influenced the greater essayists in Spain during the eighteenth century. Gregorio Mayans, who did not like Feijoo's attitude to the classics, was at times highly critical of him. In a letter dated February 18, 1733, for example, he corrects one of Feijoo's mistakes concerning Plutarch:

V. Rma. writes that Plutarch, being Greek, did not hesitate to prefer Seneca to Aristotle himself, saying that Greece did not produce a man in moral matters. V. Rma. trusted Popeblount [*sic*]; this briefly copied Petrarch; Petrarch spoke of memory, and attributed to Plutarch what he neither said, nor could have said, because his spirit was very keen on things concerning his homeland. Plutarch named Seneca twice in all his works, but he never said such a thing.

Finally, in the following centuries, three other masters of the essay are worthy of mention: Juan Valera (1824–1905), Emilio Castelar (1832–1899), and José Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955). We will return to Valera below regarding his capacity as a novelist. Emilio Castelar, the last president of the first Spanish Republic, was a great political figure and a consummate speaker and historian, who cited and used Plutarch in some of his historical portraits; as a political essayist, he was also attracted by Plutarch's works. In fact, one chapter of the third volume of his *Political and Social Matters* (1870) is entitled “The Plutarch of the Democrats.” In this essay he refers to the Plutarchan heroes Solon, Demosthenes, Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, Spartacus, and Lucullus. Ortega y Gasset was the best philosophical essayist of the twentieth century and admired Plutarch as a synthesis of ancient culture. He cited the Greek author twenty times and even coined the expression “Man of Plutarch” to describe historical characters such as Napoleon, Mussolini, Ferdinand Lassalle, and Victoria Ocampo (Pino Campos (2011)).

8. Plutarch and Spanish Biography

With respect to the *Lives*, an awareness of its model is explicitly stated in the introduction to *Famous Men of Spain* by Hernán Pérez del Pulgar (1451–1531) and throughout the text the moral approach used by the author to describe the exploits of his characters is evident (Pérez Jiménez (1990) 233–234). This biographical pattern also fits the portrait of Hernán Cortés by Juan Ginés Sepúlveda in *De orbe novo*, as has been suggested by Ramírez de Verger (1990); sporadically, we find the same imitation in Spanish historians of the conquest of America: authors such as Agustín de Zárate (1514–1560), Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557), and Fernando Pizarro y Orellana in his *Illustrious New World Men* (1623) were conscious of their application of Plutarchan methods to the portraits of Spanish conquerors. Another biographer, Juan Sedeño Arévalo, in the *Summa de varones ilustres* (1551), mentioned Plutarch by name thirty-eight times and even summarized Plutarch's *Lives* of Solon, Crassus, Cato the Elder, Pyrrhus, Fabius, Marcellus, Antony, Brutus, Cicero, Pompey, Themistocles, Numa, Camillus, Sulla, Lucullus, Pelopidas, Agesilaus, Flamininus, and Cato the Younger. In the seventeenth century a significant number of biographers (including Castillo de Solórzano and Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo, mentioned earlier) followed the moral patterns of Plutarch's *Lives*. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand the critical comments of Bartolomé Leonardo Argensola in 1627 concerning the philosophical presentation of history by "Plutarch and his minions."

But the golden age of biography was during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Plutarch was again key, perhaps as a consequence of French influence and the stimulus given to the genre by Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791). In any case, Spanish biographers were conscious of their debt to Plutarch, as can be seen from the introductions to or analysis of their works. Following trends already established, we should mention Manuel José Quintana (1772–1857), a learned man, essayist, poet, and biographer who wrote *Spanish Lives* (1808), in the preface of which, written by Antonio Ferrer del Río, the author grasped the link between Quintana's biographical method and Plutarch. Even Menéndez y Pelayo, in a lecture given at the Ateneo of Madrid in 1887, deemed Quintana "Plutarch's disciple" (*discípulo de Plutarco*), an opinion shared by Pérez Galdós, who referred to him in *Cádiz* as "Pindar, Tyrtæus, and Plutarch combined." More enthusiastic than Quintana in the use of Plutarch's works as a source for historical portraits was Emilio Castelar, referred to above: in his *Historical Gallery of Famous Women*, he undoubtedly relied on the edition of *Parallel Lives* translated by Ranz Romanillos (Sanz Morales (2004) 167).

Finally, a woman and two men deserve to be cited here because of their common interest in popularizing Plutarch's biographical art among children. Fernán Caballero (1797–1877) did so in her *Mythology Narrated for Children and History of the Great Men of Greece* (1867), basing a great number of her short portraits of Theseus and Lycurgus on the *Parallel Lives*, as well as the famous anecdote of Alexander and the *Iliad*. More important is the adaptation of Plutarch's *Lives* for children made by Vicente Barrantes Moreno (1829–1898), a friend of Fernán Caballero and author of a *Plutarch for Children: A Reading Book for Primary Schools* (1857). It would not have been extraordinary for Nicolás Díaz y Pérez (1841–1889), a native of Badajoz, to have come across this book. In fact the title of his book *Extremaduran Plutarch, a Reading Book for Primary Schools*

(1890) vividly recalls Barrantes' work, as well as the concise wording of the portraits (Cerezo Magán (2005) 682) along these lines. In any case, Díaz y Pérez was conscious of his methodological debt to Plutarch and might have read Romanillos' translation, as has been suggested by Cerezo Magán ((2005) 690–691). Plutarch's biographical method continued to inspire part of the genre in the first half of the twentieth century (Pulido Mendoza (2010)). To conclude this section on biography, we should mention a humorous view of Plutarch's heroes published in 1901 by a doctor from Madrid: Vital Aza's *Plutarquillo: Biografías festivas de personajes célebres* (Aguilar (2006)).

9. Plutarch on the Spanish Stage

Plutarch has been very fortunate in Spanish theater. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the last two acts of *Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra* (1582) by Diego López de Castro depend on the *Antony*. The same topic was treated by Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681) and Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla (1607–1648). Calderón developed it in his comedy *El mayor monstruo los celos* and dealt with Coriolanus in *The Weapons of Beauty* (*Las Armas de la Hermosura*) and *The Privilege of Women* (*El privilegio de las mujeres*), both following Plutarch although taking several liberties. Félix Lope de Vega (1562–1635) frequently used Plutarch's works, quoting him in dedications to dramatic pieces such as *The Real Lover*, which was dedicated to his own son. He often referred to Plutarch in verses and comedies, such as in the *New Art of Writing Plays in This Time*, where he demonstrated a critical position to Plutarch's aesthetic opinion of Menander. Other works by Lope in which Plutarch's influence can be traced include *The Avenging of Women*, *To Serve a Discreet Lord*, *The Cats' War*, *La Dorotea*, *To Love without Knowing Whom*, *The Man by his Word*, *The Secretary of Himself*, *The Pilgrim in his Own Country*, and *The Human Seraphim*. Two centuries later D. José Zorrilla (1817–1893) included Plutarch among the sources of his tragedy *Aspis of Cleopatra*, even though he could have taken the historical account from Alonso Castillo de Solórzano (1584–1648), whose *Story of Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra the last Queen of Egypt* (1639) owed nearly all of its contents to Plutarch.

Returning to the eighteenth century, the same theme was treated by Vicente Rodríguez Arellano in his play *Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra* (1790), though we do not know the degree of Plutarch's influence in this drama. The case is different for Cándido María Trigueros (1736–1798) and his play *The Bacchanals or Ciane of Syracuse* (1755). Trigueros was a Hellenist and a translator of Anacreon and Theocritus, who also had works by Plutarch in his library. His tragedy is based on Plutarch's *Parallela minora* (310B–C), although he introduced some poetical license, as he himself admits in the prologue-letter from 1767 (Pabón (1972) 231–244). There are other titles of neoclassical Spanish tragedies on a historic theme, presented by their authors as original (not as translations or adaptations from English or French), that dealt with Plutarch's characters, but we cannot be sure of their Plutarchan origin. However, the origin is certain for *The Death of Caesar* (1862) by Ventura de la Vega, who confessed in the prologue to having taken ideas from Quevedo's translation of *Brutus*. It has been noted, for example, that Servilia's meetings with Caesar in this play have more to do with Plutarch (*Brut.* 27) than with other sources (Martín Puente (2003) 235, (2005) 327–328).

10. Plutarch's Adventures in the Spanish Novel

Just as Plutarch had a significant impact on Spanish playwrights, so too were Spanish novelists profoundly influenced by his works. Plutarch's name is already at the top of the genre in Spain, next to such works as *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, but his subjects also served as inspiration to other novels by Cervantes. Cervantes' knowledge of Plutarch went beyond pure scholarly ornamentation, as is increasingly evident throughout his novels (Ramón Palerm (1999) and (2000); López Férez (2008) 122). Lope de Vega in his capacity as novelist cited Plutarch in his dedication to Marcia Leonarda in *The Prudent Revenge*; in *Unhappiness for Honor's Sake* one character even proclaimed Plutarch an author who paid attention to Catholic orthodoxy. Baltasar Gracián in his pedagogical novel *The Critic* quoted the *Moralia* (Bergua (1995) 32); but the *Lives* also found a place in this work, in which the author evokes the imitation of Achilles by Alexander.

In spite of some negative statements (Gil Fernández (1981) x–xiii) that could apply to the classical tradition in Spain after the Renaissance, Plutarch's influence can be traced to the present day. This is especially true for historical novels, which are well represented in the nineteenth century by Benito Pérez Galdós, but also for other sub-genres such as the pedagogical and satirical novel. A neoclassical example of the former is *Eusebius* by novelist Pedro Montengón y Paret (1745–1824), who on several occasions approves of the educational value of Plutarch's works and even describes how the protagonist increased his natural inclination to virtue by reading Seneca and Plutarch. In a better-known work from the eighteenth century, the *History of the Famous Preacher Gerundio de Campazas Alias Zotes* (1758 and 1768), written by the Jesuit José Francisco de Isla (1703–1781), the protagonist shows his scholarship by quoting Plutarch in Latin and Spanish. In the nineteenth century, Serafín Estébanez Calderón (1799–1867) looked for pretexts to refer to Plutarch in his *Andalusian Scenes* (1846). Talking in the “General Assembly” about people from the popular Triana Quarter of Seville, he uses Plutarch's name in order to make an ironic comment on the high category of such characters:

It will be enough for us to tell curious people what I have in mind for the future to write parallel lives of those heroes with this other whose names I preserve in my imagination, a work that we are sure will achieve as much glory as that of the famous Plutarch.

In a similarly critical way, Ramón Mesonero Romanos (1803–1882) uses Plutarch to underline the ignorance of popular types. One can read, for example, in *Literary Customs III* (“The Bookshop”) the following nice answer by a bookseller to his customer:

If one asks him about the merit of a work, he answers with indifference:– “It's nothing; I have not sold more than 100 copies.” For him the pattern of all books is put in his case, and from this style he appreciates more than the works of Homer the *Sarrabal de Milán*; and *Kitchen Art* much more than *Illustrious Men* by Plutarch.

Juan Valera, mentioned earlier, also showed his knowledge of Plutarch both in literary essays and in novels. Although this topic deserves further study, we will restrict ourselves here to references in his novels and critical journal articles. In the well-known *Juanita la*

Larga, for example, Doña Inés establishes a parallel between the virtue of the protagonist and Susana, Lucrezia, and Timoclea, the last two perhaps being taken from Plutarch's *De mulierum virtutibus*, where they appeared with Semiramis instead of Susana. Even more significant, the main theme of *Pepita Jiménez*, a mature woman's love for a youth, although inspired by Plato's *Phaedrus*, takes many details from Plutarch's *Amatorius* (Loud (1996) 407–409). Curiously, in his articles Valera takes Plutarch and Aristotle as authorities to affirm that the aim of writing is not to teach but to please; furthermore, at times he refers to Plutarch as the man “whom the learned Antiquity named *the good* and *the wonderful*.”

Plutarch's name and works are not absent from novels by Galdós, Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Azorín, and Silverio Lanza. Because of space limitations, this chapter can only mention the contemporaneous historical novel on Greco-Roman themes. In this field it is true that Plutarch is in fashion, judging by the title of a recent book referring to twentieth-century Spanish biography (Pulido Mendoza (2010)). It is evident in the *Catilina* (1948) of Ángel María Pascual (1911–1947), for which Plutarch's opinion on the Roman politician, according with the words of the author himself, was a definitive stimulus to write an apology for him (Montero Cartelle and Herrero Ingelmo (1994) 51). *The Legend of the False Traitor* (1994) by Antonio Gómez Rufo (b. 1954) follows the *Brutus*; and *Don't Say it Has Been a Dream* (1986), a work by Terenci Moix (1942–2003) dealing with Antony and Cleopatra, was also influenced by Plutarch, as the author himself admits. Lastly, the *Parallel Lives* has lent its heroes as the source for many novels, such as *Apócrifo Cleónico* (1996) by Martín M. Rubio Esteban, *Teseo. Las aventuras del héroe del laberinto* (2006) by Oscar Martínez García, *Salamina* and *Alejandro Magno y las águilas de Roma* (2009) by Javier Negrete, *Hellenikón* (2009) by Luis Villalón Camacho, *Valentia* (2009) by Gabriel Castello Alonso, and *Africanus* (2008) and *La traición de Roma* (2009) by Santiago Posteguillo.

11. Plutarch and Spanish Poetry

Concluding this chapter is a brief section on Spanish poets who, despite Plutarch's critical Platonic statements on poetry, sporadically mirror his heroes and themes. Of course it is difficult to follow the origin of poetic inspiration; but sometimes poets themselves offer insights into their poems by looking at their influences. This authorizes us to be certain of some influence of Plutarch in the field of Spanish poetry. In fact, this section begins with a fifteenth-century poet who named Plutarch in an ode to Trajan. I am conscious that this theme requires more in-depth research than can be provided at this moment. However, let us close our review with grateful reference to some of these poets who have been inspired, directly or even indirectly, by Plutarchan themes for their poems. Among them should be mentioned Luis Cernuda, a poet from the Spanish literary movement Generation '27, who took from Goethe the Plutarchan motif of *oknos* (hesitation) for a book whose poems are indeed related to the theme. But some Spanish poets of later generations have made greater use of Plutarch, as is the case of Luis Alberto de Cuenca, who used the *Antony* and the *Amatorius* in his poems (1990–1992), or of Francisco Ruiz Noguera, who lends his voice to Bucephalus to remember its experiences as Alexander's horse (2002). Other poets, such as Francisco Salinas Torres and Francisco Brines, who entitled his poem *Vidas paralelas*, take the Theseus topic from Plutarch. But let us close

this panoramic review with the words of another poet, José María Álvarez, a self-declared admirer of the author from Chaeronea. I would like to pay tribute to him by translating into English the opening verses of his poem about the death of Pompey (1942):

Many times have I read
in the admirable *Life of Pompey*,
of his death. I refer
to such unsurpassable pages.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The literature on the reception of Plutarch in Spain is relatively recent. Before 1990 there were few contributions available and almost all dealt with very specific aspects of this reception. If we exclude some studies on the fourteenth-century Aragonese translation of the *Lives*, which are cited in the bibliography of the recent edition by Álvarez Rodríguez (2009), the oldest publication is Lasso de la Vega's article on the Spanish translations of the *Lives* (1962), which is required reading for anyone wishing to study this subject.

More recently, in 1990, the publication of the proceedings of the first Spanish Symposium on Plutarch marks a definitive change in this field. My chapter on the influence of Plutarch in the Golden Age (Pérez Jiménez (1990)), despite its brevity, is the first attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the subject.

The last two decades have increased contributions on the subject, almost all of them published in the *Proceedings* of the different Spanish Congresses on Plutarch, although some have also appeared in book chapters and articles in scientific journals. But almost all are partial and refer to specific authors. The only two monographs that have a broader claim are the books by Jorge Bergua (1995) and Alicia Morales (2000). Bergua's study dealing with the Plutarch tradition in Spain from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries extends the ideas outlined in my 1990 article with rigor and depth and has become an invaluable reference work on the topic. Morales' book can be considered the most rigorous treatment on Spanish translations of the *Moralia* in the sixteenth century.

The most recent publication in this field is my article on Plutarch in the *Diccionario histórico de la traducción en España* (Pérez Jiménez (2009)). But the first general work that deals with the influence of Plutarch in Spanish thought, literature, and culture over the last five centuries is the present chapter.

CHAPTER 40

Shakespeare

Gordon Braden

The classical tradition for Shakespeare meant above all two things: the magical reality of its mythology, as set forth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; and the careers and personalities of the great public figures of Roman history, as narrated and analyzed in Plutarch's *Lives*. The evidence for Shakespeare's preeminent interest in just these two works is detailed and extensive. That he would find his way to Ovid's big poem was almost inevitable; he would have been introduced to it in the original in school, and a popular English translation was in print by the time he was three. Coming to Plutarch was a more contingent business. That Shakespeare did so would probably never have happened if the King of France had not commissioned in 1546 a complete French translation of Plutarch's corpus from Jacques Amyot (who received an abbacy by way of encouragement, and eventually a position at court and a bishopric). Plutarch's Greek was not easy going; the *Lives* eventually appeared in 1559, the *Moralia* in 1572. England – where there was no official support for such work, and vernacular translation from the classics was famously patchy in its coverage – needed two translators, each acting on his own initiative, to achieve the same end, and did not finish the job until early in the next century; neither made any secret of his reliance on Amyot. If a few decisions had gone differently, Shakespeare might have found Plutarch as difficult of access as Plato.

It was also not inevitable that the translations would turn out to be as good as they did. Amyot's, admired by Montaigne for “la naïveté [i.e. naturalness] et pureté de langage” (*Essais* 1.4), becomes one of the defining classics of sixteenth-century French prose. The *Moralia*, published in 1603, were taken up by no less a figure than Philemon Holland, with his usual combination of good scholarship – he worked directly from the Greek as well as from Amyot and a Latin translation – and vigorous and colloquial

English prose. It seems likely that Shakespeare read *Of Isis and Osiris* in connection with writing *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606–1607):

Moreover the habiliments of *Isis* be of different tinctures and colours: for her whole power consisteth and is employed in matter which receiveth all formes, and becommeth all maner of things, to wit, light, darknesse, day, night, fire, water, life, death, beginning and end. (Holland (1603) 1318)

One can imagine such a passage informing the celebration of Cleopatra's "infinite variety" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 2.2.242) as something specifically Egyptian – especially since Shakespeare appears to have thought that Holland had just the word for the finery of Cleopatra's self-deification:

she
In th'abiliments of the Goddess *Isis*
That day appeer'd, and oft before gave audience,
As 'tis reported, so. (3.6.16–19)

(Adlard (1975); see further Lloyd (1959); Adelman (1992) 183–188, 337–340.)

The real miracle, however, and the book that most counted for Shakespeare, was Thomas North's *Lives*, first published in 1579. North's dependence on Amyot was almost total, with spotty recourse to the Greek or a Latin translation; Amyot's name and titles are blazoned on the title page, and the translation includes Amyot's preface (on among other things the difficulties of the original: "rather sharpe, learned, and short, than plaine, polished, and easie"; North (1967) 1: 24). Moreover, North's English keeps very close not just to the sense but often to the phrasing, grammar, even cadence of Amyot's French; doing it that way can make for painful reading, but in this case the result is remembered for some of the most vivid and effective narrative prose of its time, "as wholly English as Amyot's is wholly French" (Matthiessen (1931) 71; for a look at the process, see Russell (1973) 152–158). It does help that North does not mimic the *pureté* of Amyot's diction: "it spited him to the guttes" (3: 54), etc. Among those taken by the result was Shakespeare, who time and again, more often and more closely than is the case with any other source, all but transcribes North's text into his own:

he had lamented the death of Cassius, calling him the last of all the Romanes, being impossible that Rome should ever breede againe so noble and valliant a man as he. (North (1967) 6: 226)

The last of all the Romans, fare thee well:
It is impossible, that ever Rome
Should breed thy fellow.

(*Julius Caesar* 5.3.98–100)

A lacuna in *Coriolanus* (2.3.243) can be filled from the passage in North that Shakespeare is following (North (1967) 2: 143).

Such parallels suggest that Shakespeare had North before him as he wrote. A 1,200-page folio (there were no abridged editions), it would have been on the pricey side. A bound copy of the first edition retailed for 14 shillings (Thomas (1950) 108; without the binding it would have been slightly cheaper), during a time when a busy dramatist might

earn something like £20 a year from writing or contributing to plays. North's Plutarch would not have been an impulse purchase, though owning it was not outside the realm of possibility if it seemed important enough. Or came to seem; the evidence hints at an initial encounter in the mid-1590s that was largely a matter of set dressing. The list of Theseus' sexual conquests in *Midsummer Night's Dream* (2.1.77–80) seems to have been assembled from North; most editors are sufficiently sure of this to emend two of the names (Perigenia and Eagle) to match those in North (Perigouna and Aegle). Nine characters in *Titus Andronicus* have names that can be found in the fifteenth-century life of Scipio Africanus which North includes at the end of his 1579 volume (Law (1943) 147). The interest in the first and last lives itself suggests tentative entry into forbidding terrain. By the time of *Henry V* (1599) Shakespeare had gotten farther; Captain Fluellen offers an amiable parody of the methodology of Plutarch's work: "as *Alexander* kild his friend *Clytus*, being in his Ales and his Cuppes; so also *Harry Monmouth* being in his right wittes, and his good judgements, turn'd away the fat Knight with the great belly doublet" (4.7.43–46; on Plutarch's relevance to the rest of the play, see Mossman (1994)). Shakespeare would by then have been absorbed in the life that Plutarch pairs with Alexander's; by the end of 1599 *Julius Caesar* was in performance, a sudden display of how profound an asset Plutarch could be to the stage. North is the primary and defining source. Plot and characterization are taken from the lives of Caesar, Brutus, and Antony, with some possible glances elsewhere (on these see Honigman (1959); Homan (1975)), and the presence of North's wording can be felt all the way through. Less than a decade later the playwright returned to the same well, for plays that make an even tighter fit with their sources: *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* (probably 1608) are based on a single life each. In passing, Shakespeare confects *Timon of Athens* (1607) out of a digression in the life of Antony (with help from the life of Alcibiades). The collaboration with Plutarch and North proved to be one of Shakespeare's most fruitful partnerships.

It inspires for one thing a sea-change in Shakespeare's representation of classical antiquity. The Roman setting is central to *Titus Andronicus*, but the Rome in question is an ahistorical phantasmagoria, unmoored to actual events (Shakespeare may have made up the story himself) and jumbling together half-comprehended institutions and decor from widely separated periods into a nightmarish no-time. This Rome is close to the Rome on view in contemporary presentations of antiquity on the stage, but with *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare begins to offer something different. His three Plutarchan plays (leaving aside *Timon*) make a serious attempt at historical accuracy, and achieve and keep an aura of authenticity almost unique in the genre (Spencer (1957) is still the best overview). Events are telescoped or reordered for effect, but never beyond recognition. There are eye-catching anachronisms, such as the clock that chimes in *Julius Caesar* or the caps and hat (the latter emended away in the eighteenth century by embarrassed editors) waved and tossed in *Coriolanus*, but they actually seem less egregious than some of the things in North: Caesar becoming "chiefe Bishoppe of Rome," Cicero's wife Terentia "wearing her husbandes breeches" (North (1967) 5: 7, 343). The subjects themselves seem chosen not just for their dramatic potential but also to examine key transitional moments in Rome's civic history: the end of the patrician monopoly on power in the early Republic, the replacement of the Republic by the Principate four centuries later. *Coriolanus* manifests a notable curiosity about some comparatively arcane specifics of political history, the shifting institutional arrangements of the early Republic, the details

of its electoral customs, and the maneuvering that leads to the establishment of the tribunate and the indictment of Coriolanus; the play has been called “one of the great feats of the historical imagination in Renaissance Europe” (Spencer (1957) 35). The three plays also come across as a highly successful experiment in recreating what it might mean to be “Roman”; the Romans in them do not quite talk or act like characters in other Shakespearean plays, and that effort of anthropological imagination – employing aspects of “Roman” ethnicity visible in a wide range of contemporary dramatic representations (see Ronan (1995)), but with unusual focus and discipline – proved remarkably effective. No less a figure than Alexander Pope was convinced: “In *Coriolanus* and *Julius Caesar*, not only the Spirit, but Manners, of the *Romans* are exactly drawn; and still a nicer distinction is shown, between the manners of the *Romans* in the time of the former, and of the latter” (Hamner (1745) 1: xviii; see Cantor (1976, supplemented 1997) for what is in effect a systematic development of Pope’s claim).

This aura of authenticity of course is inseparable from the skill with which it is dramatized, and the really momentous thing is the impact of this effort of historical recreation on Shakespeare’s way as a playwright. *Julius Caesar* is one of the first dramas performed in the new Globe Theatre, and in other ways as well opens a new phase in his career. His next tragedy is *Hamlet*, probably 1600; after *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Lear*, the return to Plutarch rounds off his work as a tragic playwright. This circumstance has called forth some strong claims for the relation between Shakespeare’s attention to Plutarch and the most august phase of his dramatic career (e.g. Thomson (1952) 242). A recent discussion calls *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare’s crossing of his own Rubicon: “marking off the richly inventive but largely plot-driven plays of the 1590s from the deeply characterological dramas that follow, in order to take possession of his territory as a dramatist” (Marshall (2000) 80). The transition is one into early modernity: “What happens ... in Shakespeare’s conversion of [Plutarchan] narrative into drama, is the establishment of our culture’s prevailing model of character as one that is at once intensely performative and putatively interiorized” (Marshall (2000) 73). Just that Shakespearean sense of interiority has been cited as an important way in which his Romans are not like those in his source material – “For Shakespeare character is the product of an essentially private struggle ... For Plutarch and the Romans, character not only is expressed but is defined by public action” (G.B. Miles (1989) 282). Even so, Shakespeare’s achievement is not so much a contradiction of the record as “an enrichment of his ancient sources, an elaboration of themes in which they had little interest” (ibid.) – things change precisely through meticulous attention to what came before. And there is also the risk of simply underestimating Plutarch’s own artfulness. Recent studies have articulated the ways in which his craft is indebted to the classical tragedians whom he quotes repeatedly in his work (see especially Pelling (2009)); in reading Plutarch Shakespeare was taking in some of the legacy of the Athenian predecessors to whom he had no direct access.

A full assessment of these transactions has been slow to emerge, in part because there are so many players involved. Despite a consensus that Shakespeare dealt only with North, it is impossible to guess without looking where direct attention to Plutarch and Amyot is also relevant. With *Coriolanus*, we have as well Plutarch’s own source in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and there we can witness Plutarch giving the story a new shape: “it is primarily through him that it became what it is for Shakespeare, a tragedy of ambition and anger” (Russell (1963) 22; see also Pelling (1997)). Amyot and North

share a conviction that history generally (“remembrance of things past,” North (1967) 1: 9; Shakespeare lifts that phrase for Sonnet 30) and Plutarch’s *Lives* in particular are to be valued for their didactic effectiveness, especially in matters of public life. Amyot, who credits the legend that Trajan was Plutarch’s pupil, calls history “the scholemistresse of Princes” (1: 19); North, in a dedication to Queen Elizabeth, tactfully concedes that she needs neither to read this book herself nor to do so in translation, and stresses the lessons it has to offer to her subjects: “amonge all the profane bookes, that are in reputacion at this day, there is none ... that teacheth so much honor, love, obedience, reverence, zeale, and devocion to Princes” (1: 4). This announced agenda does not dramatically affect the translation itself. It has been sensed (Denton (1997)) in a perceptible escalation of scorn by both Amyot and North for the Roman commons. Plutarch’s relatively mild *ochlon* (mob) becomes “toute telle canaille” in Amyot and “all suche rable” in North (2: 166); North adds some marginal notes: “See the fickle mindes of common people” (2: 159). Shakespeare, however, does not go especially far in this direction; his portrayal of Roman crowd behavior has its satirical side, but only, especially in *Coriolanus*, as part of a more balanced and sympathetic configuration.

Of more consequence is an adjustment of Plutarch’s moral vocabulary begun by Amyot and extended by North: “constancy” becomes the signature Roman virtue (see G. Miles (1996) 110–122). This one term is used to translate several different words in the original; what in Plutarch is variously courage, gravity, impassivity, or steadfastness dovetails toward a comprehensive virtue whose main resource is the capacity not to change. North again adds emphasis in his marginalia: “The wonderfull constancy of Brutus, in matters of justice and equitie” (North (1967) 6: 217), etc. A similar convergence may be found in Thomas Lodge’s translation of Seneca’s philosophy (G. Miles (1996) 7). Guiding it is contemporary Neosticism, in which constancy is the key term; Queen Elizabeth adopts its banner in taking *semper eadem*, “always the same,” as a personal motto. In North’s hands, the great men of classical history become retroactively Stoics. Plutarch, a Platonist who wrote against points of Stoic doctrine, would not have cared for this shift, but the Stoic manner is sufficiently consistent with the general style of self-control admired by the ancient Romans that the distortion is not outrageous; Shakespeare in any case found it useful in the business of imagining them for the contemporary stage. He has them treat constancy as a major point on which they wish to prove themselves; they boast of what it costs them: “I have made strong proofe of my Constancie, / Giving my selfe a voluntary wound / Heere, in the Thigh” (*Julius Caesar* 2.1.298–300). “Constancie” here is Shakespeare’s contribution; the speaker is (like Elizabeth) a woman, Portia, searching for what will impress her husband Brutus with her moral stamina – and finding it: “Render me worthy of this Noble Wife” (302). Such usage marks all the Plutarchan plays. It has been argued that North’s translations of the biographies of Brutus, Antony, and Coriolanus “can be read as a kind of triptych on the theme of constancy” (G. Miles (1996) 110), and that Shakespeare took the hint in choosing for dramatization the lives that he did.

Other “Roman” habits gear with this one – for instance, their way, at least in the plays about the early Empire (the discrimination of different periods in Roman history which Pope praises may be at work here), of thinking of themselves in the third person. The prime example is Julius Caesar, whose boast at being “constant as the Northerne Starre” (3.1.60) is linked to a lordly shift in pronominal number: “I do know but One / That unassayleable

holds on his Ranke, / Unshak'd of Motion: and that I am he" (68–70). These are almost the last things he ever says; his actual last word is his own name, the addressee of a stern command: "Then fall *Caesar*" (76). This illeistic habit had been displayed in Caesar's first scene: "Speake, *Caesar* is turn'd to heare" (1.2.19). Probably inspired by schoolroom reading of his *Gallic Wars*, it is not itself attested in Plutarch, but political advice from a "flatterer" – "What, doe you not remember that you are Caesar?" (North (1967) 5: 61) – strengthens the effect when recast as first-person utterance: "I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd, / Then what I feare: for alwayes I am *Caesar*" (1.2.212–213). Speakers deploying their own names that way are already imagining themselves as the subject of somebody else's reading. The gesture is one of the distinctive features of Senecan tragedy, and migrates from there to the Renaissance stage (Braden (1985) 33–34, 68, *et alibi*); in Shakespeare it feels specifically Roman: "I am / *Anthony* yet. Take hence this Jack, and whip him" (*Antony and Cleopatra* 3.13.92–93). Such characters are not fooling themselves if they think they are playing to an audience, not necessarily a distant one, for whom a good name is rooted in an almost tautological sense of personal consistency:

Safe *Antony*, *Brutus* is safe enough:
 I dare assure thee, that no Enemy
 Shall ever take alive the Noble *Brutus*:
 The Gods defend him from so great a shame,
 When you do finde him, or alive, or dead,
 He will be found like *Brutus*, like himselfe.
 (*Julius Caesar* 5.4.20–25)

The passage is one that Shakespeare copies out almost verbatim (North (1967) 6: 233). When it is discovered in the next scene that Brutus has conducted himself as expected, it is Antony who salutes his enemy as "the Noblest Roman of them all" (5.5.67).

Brutus' suicide seals his reputation for "constancy." The Renaissance was fascinated by the respect with which such suicides – often linked (though the connection was controversial) to the prescriptions of Stoic philosophy – were seen in antiquity as the dignified, indeed heroic response to defeat and desperate circumstance; they become a regular feature of dramas set in Roman times (Ronan (1995) 87–99). There are several suicides, all treated as honorable responses to a hopeless situation, in *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* (again, *Coriolanus* seems a different environment, though the hero does know how his departure from Rome with the Volscian army will end). The Roman nature of such suicide is voiced in *Hamlet* – "I am more an anticke Romaine then a Dane" (5.2.293) says a desolate Horatio as he reaches for the poisoned cup – though the act is summarily prevented by the character whose own thoughts of suicide had been forstalled by "conscience"; both men had recently witnessed a funeral in which rites had been curtailed by the mere suspicion of suicide. Suicide in a Christian universe is a mortal sin. A sense that suicide in the Roman manner was something authentically courageous and principled nevertheless pulled at the European imagination; Dante puts suicides in the seventh circle of hell, but assigns Cato of Utica to purgatory. Not the least aspect of the negative capability manifested by Shakespeare's Plutarchan plays is reimagining (on the eve of writing *Hamlet*) a world in which the Christian horror of suicide (even to some extent homicide; see Roe (2004) 179–182) has no purchase.

Julius Caesar contains a conversation on the ethics of suicide, though a confusing one that has taken some puzzling out. It is not Christian but classical in origins, closely based on a passage in Plutarch, but skewed by North in two ways. Cassius asks Brutus if he plans to end his life should they lose the upcoming battle:

Brutus answered him, being yet but a young man, and not overgreatly experienced in the world: I trust, (I know not how) a certaine rule of Philosophie, by the which I did greatly blame and reprove Cato for killing of him selfe, as being no lawfull nor godly acte ... not to give place and yeld to divine providence, and not constantly and patiently to take whatsoever it pleaseth him to send us, but to drawe backe, and flie: but being nowe in the midst of the daunger, I am of a contrary mind. For if it be not the will of God, that this battell fall out fortunate for us: I will looke no more for hope ... but will rid me of this miserable world, and content me with my fortune. (North (1967) 6: 222)

Brutus appears to undergo a change of mind in mid-speech. North (or the compositor) may not have realized that “being yet but a young man” should be part of Brutus’ speech rather than a preface to it – in Plutarch he is clearly contrasting a youthful opinion with a present one – though the present tense of “trust” suggests an active mistaking of the sense. A more significant distortion comes as Brutus continues: “I gave up my life for my contry in the Ides of Marche, for the which I shall live in another more glorious worlde.” In Plutarch Brutus says that since the assassination “I have lived another life, free and of good repute” (*eleutherén kai endoxon*), a better life but still one of this world. North (with a nudge from Amyot’s future tense: “j’en vivrai une autre libre et glorieuse”; Amyot (1951) 2: 1083; Amyot actually has the tense right in his first edition, but it is changed in later printings) shifts the register into an anticipation of heaven.

Eliminating reference to Brutus’ youth puts his inconsistency unambiguously in the present moment, and the contrast between his two minds is underlined with one of playwrighting’s basic resources, breaking up the speech:

BRUTUS Even by the rule of that Philosophy,
 By which I did blame *Cato*, for the death
 Which he did give himselfe, I know not how:
 But I do finde it Cowardly, and vile,
 For feare of what might fall, so to prevent
 The time of life, arming my selfe with patience,
 To stay the providence of some high Powers,
 That governe us below.
 CASSIUS Then, if we loose this Battaile,
 You are contented to be led in Triumph
 Thorow the streets of Rome.
 BRUTUS No *Cassius*, no:
 Thinke not thou Noble Romane,
 That ever *Brutus* will go bound to Rome,
 He beares too great a minde.

(*Julius Caesar* 5.1.100–113)

Shakespeare has been congratulated on the use he makes of the confusion: “He got over it, and produced a new effect and one very true to human nature, by making Brutus’

latter sentiment the sudden response of his heart, in defiance of his philosophy, to Cassius' anticipation of what they must expect if defeated" (MacCallum (1935) 185). Perhaps more remarkable, though, is his handling of the end of the speech:

But this same day
Must end that worke, the Ides of March begun.
And whether we shall meete againe, I know not:
Therefore our everlasting farewell take. (113–116)

Without showing any evidence of checking the original, Shakespeare has excised the look to the afterlife that would have seemed authoritative in North and been nearly instinctive in a Christian writer, and replaced it with foursquare bleakness: the only thing lasting forever is farewell. (For further detail, as well as other examples of Shakespeare's seeming recovery of Plutarch, see Pelling (2009) 268–272.) Instinct in this case removes the translator's distortion for a more authentic sense of the pagan original: or perhaps not so much instinct as a conscious decision at work in all of Shakespeare's Plutarchan plays to imagine what it would be like – what it would be like for an entire society – to live without thinking of eternal life in the Christian sense as a possibility. Christian motifs and language certainly manifest themselves in these plays, but on this point the playwright's guard seems to have been up. North may have suggested such a thought experiment in a backhanded way himself: "If they have done this without hope of heaven, what should we doe that looke for immortalitie?" (North (1967) 1: 4–5). It might have been expected that thinking there was no real life beyond this one would make a person cling to life more shamelessly and fear death more intensely, but the record of Roman history is that it can actually be otherwise, in ways that Christendom could not help but admire. Shakespeare's Plutarchan plays are among other things an exploration of that seeming paradox.

Part of the rationality to the paradox is that Roman suicide allows one to end even a ruined life with an act of authority and control. Caesar's last words – "Then fall *Caesar*" – almost put his death in this category: a command that is obeyed. By convention such power of command and the demeanor that goes with it are preeminently and conspicuously masculine. It is fair to call *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare's most male play. The only female characters are both gone by the start of Act III, and, as noted above, the stronger of them, Portia, makes her impression by sharing the heroic constancy of her husband and her father; like them, she will eventually take her own life. The scene between her and Brutus is adapted closely from Plutarch, here a guide to presenting "Romanness" as an especially domineering strain of masculinity: there is no countervailing feminine source of power in play. No one mentions Cleopatra's presence in Rome during the events of the first three acts – understandably, since neither does Plutarch. Elsewhere, though, Plutarch's treatment of women is among the most nuanced to survive from antiquity, and provides material for a different sense of gender's role in history. When Shakespeare returns to Plutarch, he finds his way to stories which turn precisely on a heroic Roman male's submission to a woman whom he finds he cannot defy. They are cautionary stories, but not just that.

In *Coriolanus* the woman is his mother. Her fearsome importance in her son's life appears to have been deduced by Plutarch from not much more in Dionysius than the

incidentally mentioned fact that she was a widow; the picture of her as the focus of his ambition is as far as we can tell unprecedented:

For he thought nothing made him so happie and honorable, as that his mother might heare every bodie praise and commend him, that she might allwayes see him returne with a crowne upon his head, and that she might still embrace him with teares ronning downe her cheekes for joye. ... Martius thinking all due to his mother, that had bene also due to his father if he had lived: dyd not only content him selfe to rejoyce and honour her, but at her desire tooke a wife also, by whom he had two children, and yet never left his mothers house therefore. (North (1967) 2: 147)

The Roman to end (almost literally) all Romans is a momma's boy. Shakespeare makes Plutarch's theory street-talk at Rome – "though soft conscienc'd men can be content to say it was for his Countrey, he did it to please his Mother" (*Coriolanus* 1.1.35–37) – and has Volumnia confirm it with glimpses into his upbringing:

If my Sonne were my Husband, I would freelier rejoyce in that absence wherein he wonne Honor, then in the embracements of his Bed, where he would shew most love. ... To a cruell Warre I sent him, from whence he return'd, his browes bound with Oake. I tell thee Daughter, I sprang not more in joy at first hearing he was a Man-child, then now in first seeing he had proved himselfe a man. (1.3.2–5, 13–17)

When the news comes from Corioles: "Oh, he is wounded, I thanke the Gods for't" (2.1.119). She does not say such things in Plutarch, but suggestions on filling out her portrait this way could be found in the fierce *Apophthegmes of Lacedaemonian Women* in his *Moralia* (Holland (1603) 479–802), most of which concern the feelings of Spartan mothers for their sons.

Intensifying Volumnia's agency intensifies the final confrontation, when she must and does secure the destruction of what she has created. (Supposedly triumphant, she has not a word to say after her victory.) For almost a hundred lines in that scene Shakespeare's words weave in and out of North's, the longest sustained imitation of a specific anterior text anywhere in his work. (For the relevant Greek, Latin, French, and English texts, with variations typographically indicated, see MacCallum (1935) 631–643.) The climax is heightened mainly with repetitions:

Martius seeing that, could refraine no lenger, but went straight and lifte her up, crying out: Oh mother, what have you done to me? And holding her hard by the right hande, oh mother, sayed he, you have wonne a happy victorie for your countrie, but mortall and unhappy for your sonne: for I see my self vanquished by you alone. (North (1967) 2: 186)

O Mother, Mother!
What have you done? Behold, the Heavens do ope,
The Gods looke downe, and this unnaturall Scene
They laugh at. Oh my Mother, Mother: Oh!
You have wonne a happy Victory to Rome.
But for your Sonne, beleve it: Oh beleve it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortall to him. But let it come. (5.3.183–190)

The most potent change from the original, a devastatingly successful assertion of a specifically maternal source of power, is not even Shakespeare's idea:

thou shalt no sooner
March to assault thy Country, then to treade
(Trust too't, thou shalt not) on thy Mothers wombe
That brought thee to this world. (123–126)

Shakespeare's contribution is to break the speech here, and have Volumnia pause before going on; "thy mothers wombe, that brought thee first into this world" is North's doing (184). In Plutarch the invader is stepping on his mother's dead body (*nekran*); Amyot has "corps" (Amyot (1951) 1: 511).

The tragedy of *Coriolanus* is internal to Roman values: both mother and son embrace them utterly as they make their way to mutual desolation. In *Antony and Cleopatra* the woman is an exotic outsider, and is seen as the principal reason that the man loses hold of the heroic Roman identity supposedly embodied in his name: "sometimes when he is not *Anthony*, / He comes too short of that great Property / Which still should go with *Anthony*" (1.1.59–61). His unmastered lust for the Queen of Egypt has changed the "triple Pillar of the world" into "a Strumpets foole" (12–13). This is the note on which Shakespeare's play begins; it is also the perspective announced by Plutarch, who groups Antony – "so caried away with the vaine love of this woman, as if he had bene glued unto her" (North (1967) 6: 69) – with Demetrius Poliorcetes as instructive bad examples: "we shall be the forwarder in reading and following the good, if we know the lives, and see the deformity of the wicked" (5: 373). Neither author, however, keeps entirely to this track. Shakespeare's Cleopatra is, famously, too vivid and complex a character to be remembered simply as a destructive temptress; she presents a formidable challenge not just to Antony's self-control but to the entire Roman scheme of values which he has such trouble representing. You would not quite say that about Plutarch's account, but he does lay what turns out to be groundwork. His portrait of Antony steadily exceeds the didactic boundaries that he sets out at the start, in an excellent example of his characteristic manner, "to begin by stating points in a generalised and unsubtle way, then gradually to refine them as he proceeds" (Pelling (1988) 12–13); the final message is more like "awareness of the fragility of a great man, and of his vulnerability to the exploitation of his own warmest qualities" (15). The real surprise, however, is that with Antony's death the *Life* still has ten chapters to go. Antony's story as Plutarch understands it is not over until Cleopatra's is over (as the story of Caesar is not over until the death of Brutus); and it takes some telling because it involves a significant change in the respect with which she is treated. There is maneuvering and suspense on the question of whether she will accept the offers of Octavius Caesar and continue living under his rule. When instead she herself does the Roman thing, she claims a dignity not expected of her. The final word is in effect given by her attendant Charmion when the body is discovered: "One of the souldiers seeing her, angrily sayd unto her: Is that well done Charmion? Verie well sayd she againe, and meete for a Princes discended from the race of so many noble kings" (North (1967) 6: 87). The victorious general can only agree, and makes a further concession which she had indeed asked for in her laments over her lover's body: "Caesar ... wondred at her noble minde and corage, and therefore commaunded she should be nobly buried, and layed by Antonius" (88). The honorable joint burial is an admission that

Cleopatra's final actions have done something to redeem Antony's reputation as well; the woman for whom he came to ruin was indeed worthy of his previously baffling devotion.

Shakespeare copies the exchange between Charmion and the soldier closely into his last scene, and makes the new emperor's generous reaction the final speech. He also makes it explicit that assuming a Roman identity at the end was indeed on Cleopatra's mind: "what's brave, what's Noble, / Let's do it after the high Roman fashion, / And make death proud to take us" (4.16.88–90). She knows the password, and even forswears her femininity in using it: "My Resolution's plac'd, and I have nothing / Of woman in me: Now from head to foote / I am Marble constant" (5.2.234–236). But that is not all there is to it. The swirl of affect around Cleopatra's final actions is a volatile thing – "I am Fire, and Ayre" (284) – much of it not answerable to any conventional grid of Roman virtue. It is both maternal and erotic – "Dost thou not see my Baby at my breast, / That suckes the Nurse asleepe" (304–305) – and even Caesar is caught off guard by her sexual presence in death: "she lookes like sleepe, / As she would catch another *Anthony* / In her strong toyle of Grace" (340–342). The last scene is indeed flush with the sense that she means to join her lover again: "Go fetch / My best Attires. I am againe for *Cidnus*, / To meete *Marke Anthony*" (223–225). When she talks like this, she is echoing, though she cannot know it, Antony's own anticipation when he thought her already dead:

Eros? I come my Queene. *Eros?* Stay for me,
Where Soules do couch on Flowers, wee'l hand in hand,
And with our sprightly Port make the Ghostes gaze:
Dido, and her *Aeneas* shall want Troopes,
And all the haunt be ours. (4.15.50–54)

Shakespeare seems to violate his own rule against allowing his classical pagans any hope of otherworldly fulfillment; but the rule in fact holds. By the standards of Christianity, there is no serious religious conviction sustaining these last visions; they are final flares of longing, powerful precisely as fervent denial of what is happening, and expressive more of loss than of hope. And even within the half-light world of classical legend, Antony's invocation of Dido and Aeneas as a touchstone of undying love is weirdly added: Aeneas made just that choice of Roman duty over personal happiness that Antony never could, and Dido's resulting suicide was unconsolated and vindictive. The notion of Elysium as a celebrity competition is almost a parody of the arena of Roman public life, with politics displaced by a sport more suited to Antony's talents – though the parody is also not a joke, since a good deal of what Shakespeare's play has been about is the uncanny power of a kind of theatricalized make-believe to affect the worldly reality around it.

The most famous instance is the first lesson that Cleopatra taught Antony, and the best known and longest Plutarchan quotation in the script:

when she was sent unto by divers letters, both from Antonius him selfe, and also from his frendes, she made so light of it, and mocked Antonius so much, that she disdained to set forward otherwise, but to take her barge in the river of Cydnus, the poope whereof was of gold, the sailes of purple, and the owers of silver, which kept stroke in rowing after the sounde of the musicke of flutes, howboyes, citherns, violls, and such other instruments as they played upon in the barge. And now for the person of her selfe: she was layed under a pavillion of cloth of gold of tissue, apparellled and attired like the goddess Venus,

commonly drawn in picture: and hard by her, on either hand of her, pretie faire boyes apparelled as painters doe set forth god Cupide, with litle fannes in their hands, with the which they fanned wind upon her. Her Ladies and gentlewomen also, the fairest of them were apparelled like the nymphes Nereides (which are the mermaides of the waters) and like the Graces, some steering the helme, others tending the tackle and ropes of the barge, out of the which there came a wonderfull passing sweete savor of perfumes, that perfumed the wharfes side, pestered with innumerable multitudes of people. Some of them followed the barge all alongest the rivers side: others also ranne out of the citie to see her comming in. So that in thend, there ranne such multitudes of people one after an other to see her, that Antonius was left post alone in the market place, in his Imperiall seate to geve audience: and there went a rumor in the peoples mouthes, that the goddesse Venus was come to play with the god Bacchus, for the generall good of all Asia. (North (1967) 6: 25–26)

“Pleasingly, most of P.’s account may be true” (Pelling (1988) 187). It makes perfect sense as savvy politics, engineered with the help of a Roman operative who knew Antony. Cleopatra had been under a cloud for ambiguous actions during the war against Caesar’s assassins and been summoned to explain herself; she turns the tables on the powerful triumvir with an artful *jeu mythologique* that steals his audience before he even lays eyes on her. He must come to her, but when he does she offers him his power back with a role in her scenario. Bacchus it is, and the rest is history.

Shakespeare gives the description to Antony’s right-hand man Enobarbus, explaining to fellow Romans why the just negotiated marriage with Octavia cannot last:

The Barge she sat in, like a burnisht Throne
 Burnt on the water: the Poope was beaten Gold,
 Purple the Sailes: and so perfumed that
 The Windes were Love-sicke with them. The Owers were Silver,
 Which to the tune of Flutes kept stroke, and made
 The water which they beate, to follow faster;
 As amorous of their strokes. For her owne person,
 It beggerd all discription, she did lye
 In her Pavillion, cloth of Gold, of Tissue,
 O’re-picturing that Venus, where we see
 The fancie out-worke Nature. On each side her,
 Stood pretty Dimpled Boyes, like smiling Cupids,
 With divers coulour’d Fannes whose winde did seeme,
 To glove the delicate cheekes which they did coole,
 And what they undid did. ...
 Her Gentlewomen, like the Nereides,
 So many Mer-maides tended her i’t’h’eyes,
 And made their bends adornings. At the Helme,
 A seeming Mer-maide steeres: The Silken Tackle,
 Swell with the touches of those Flower-soft hands,
 That yarely frame the office. From the Barge
 A strange invisible perfume hits the sense
 Of the adjacent Wharfes. The Citty cast
 Her people out upon her: and *Anthony*
 Enthron’d i’t’h’Market-place, did sit alone,

Whisling to'th'ayre: which but for vacancie,
 Had gone to gaze on *Cleopater* too,
 And made a gap in Nature. (2.2.198–225)

(The scene is also on a provocatively located tapestry in another late play: *Cymbeline* 2.4.66–76.) Most differences between Plutarch's and Shakespeare's descriptions are answerable to the change in genre; to make his point, Enobarbus touches things up wherever he can, cumulatively taking Plutarch's comparatively objective, visual description into the fantastic. The translators are already headed that way. Plutarch reports that the attendant boys are decked out like Cupid, but calling them "beaux petits" is Amyot's idea (Amyot (1951) 2: 887); North's "pretie faire" in turn becomes "pretty Dimpled" in Shakespeare (like the irresistible young man in *Venus and Adonis* 242). Shakespeare's mermaids descend through North from Amyot's intruded gloss, "les fées des eaux." The silver oars are from Plutarch, but he says nothing about their movements keeping time with the accompanying music; that flourish is suggested by Amyot ("l'on maniait au son et à la cadence d'une musique") and made explicit by North. The momentum of this in turn sweeps Enobarbus into a vision of the oarstrokes as erotic gestures, with the river itself becoming sexually aroused. The air is already lovesick as well, and by the end longs desperately to commit an unnatural act. The copying of a painting is heightened into a scene where Fancy outworks Nature; the speech is echoed much later in Cleopatra's fabulous portrait – new in Shakespeare's play – of "an Emperor *Anthony*": "His legges bestrid the Ocean ..." (5.2.81). Desire does that. For once Shakespeare gets to turn Plutarch into Ovid.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

The best comprehensive introduction of the topic is still MacCallum (1935), who summarizes a century of scholarship and provides generous quotation of the relevant passages in Plutarch and Shakespeare, with perceptive and enlightened commentary on specific passages and problems. Spencer (1968) prints a modernized text of North's translation of the lives of Coriolanus, Caesar, Brutus, and Antony with apposite passages from Shakespeare at the bottom of the page; unmodernized texts of these lives, passages from two others, and numerous other possible sources and analogues, together with a long introduction, may be found in Bullough (1964). Scholarship and commentary through the mid-1990s is summarized in detail in Gillespie (2001) 425–436; escaping coverage there is a special issue of the Japanese journal *Poetica* devoted entirely to Shakespeare and Plutarch (McGrail (1997)). Probably the most acute recent work, which has the advantage of beginning from a classicist's point of view, has been in a series of publications by Pelling ((1988),

(1997), (2009)). Much of the discussion of Plutarch and Shakespeare is dispersed in editions and critical analyses of *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. The critical tradition generally on Shakespeare's Roman plays is surveyed in Braden (2003). MacCallum's precedent of treating them collectively has become a tradition; in addition to Cantor (1976) and G. Miles (1996), mentioned above, particularly relevant discussions include: Simmons (1973), reading the plays within an implicit Christian context; Miola (1983), expanding conventional coverage to include all of Shakespeare's works set in classical Roman times; and Kahn (1997), giving centrality to the relation between "Romanness" and gender.

CHAPTER 41

The Post-Renaissance Reception of Plutarch in England

Judith Mossman

The following discussion will focus almost exclusively on the *Lives*. The reception of the *Moralia*, because of the enormous variety of the corpus, is necessarily extremely difficult to discuss as a whole, especially with brevity. Significantly, translations have been few and far between since the Renaissance: Philemon Holland's version of all the essays (1603, revised 1657) has never been reprinted in its entirety, nor has the translation "by several hands" (1684–1694); and apart from the Loeb no one else has ever attempted the whole task in English. While there are certainly indications that Pope was familiar with Holland's translation of the *Moralia* (see Jones (2003) 263–273), and individual essays were popular, in general it was as a biographer that Plutarch made most impact in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a view whose influence persists today.

His Lives, both in his own esteem, and that of others, accounted the Noblest of his Works, have been long since render'd into *English*: But as that Translation was only from the *French*, so it suffer'd this double disadvantage, first, that it was but a Copy of a Copy, and that too but lamely taken from the *Greek* Original: Secondly, that the *English* language was then unpolish'd, and far from the perfection which it has since attain'd: So that the first Version is not only ungrammatical and ungraceful, but in many places almost unintelligible. (John Dryden, *Works*, 17: 228)

So John Dryden justifies the enterprise of his new cooperative translation of Plutarch's *Lives* at the expense of North's Plutarch. Dryden did not in fact translate any of the *Lives* himself, but acted as editor, commissioning and assembling the work of others, supplying himself a dedicatory epistle addressed to the Duke of Ormonde and a *Life* of Plutarch. Nesvet (2005) has shown how Dryden's dedicatory epistle assimilates Plutarch's political standing to that of Dryden's patron, Ormonde; and also how Dryden, the advocate of

religious tolerance, in contrast to North, softens Plutarch's paganism into a sort of humanist social convention: "I say the Religion he *profess'd*; for 'tis no way probable that so great a Philosopher, and so Wise a Man, should believe the Superstitions and Fopperies of *Paganism*: But that he accommodated himself to the use, and receiv'd Customs of his Country. He was indeed a Priest of *Apollo*, as himself acknowledges, but that proves him not to have been a *Politheist*" (*Works* 17: 250). One is left wondering whether Dryden had read Plutarch's Delphic dialogues at all. But whether he had or not, this stance on Plutarch is key to Dryden's agenda in producing a new Plutarch, and suggests one reason for the enthusiasm with which Plutarch was read outside the scholarly world in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Dryden treats Plutarch's religion as he does because he reads Plutarch's *persona* as that of a gentleman of importance of his own time. Late antique sources make Trajan bestow consular ornaments and an imperial procuratorship on Plutarch and decree that none of the governors of Illyria should do anything without his consent. Dryden transforms this account into Trajan making Plutarch Archon of Illyria, and comments: "The chiefest [office] ... was known by the name of Archon ... and the Dignity and Power was not much less for that of our Lord Mayor of London." (See also Nesvet (2005) 433.) The parallels Dryden creates between Plutarch's supposed activities in Illyria and Ormonde's in Ireland emanate from this vision of Plutarch as a civic grandee. Dryden is not alone in this assimilation of Plutarch to the landed gentry of his own day: much later, in 1926, Wilamowitz feels the same connection (Wilamowitz (1995) 52): "the entertainment [of grand Roman visitors by Plutarch in Chaeronea] becomes as much a burden as an honour, as it was for ourselves in former days, when the generals on manoeuvre billeted at an estate." It is perhaps this ability, based on Plutarch's artful construction of his authorial persona, to figure Plutarch as "one of us," which has ensured his popularity more than anything else. English country gentleman (note the title of Dodds' still delightful essay (1933): "The portrait of a Greek gentleman"), Irish squireen, or Prussian junker, readers of a certain class could recognize a highly congenial portrait of themselves, or their friends. Perhaps Dryden's tendency (discussed by Mossman (2007) 92–97) to insert himself into his own biography of Plutarch is another indication of such reader identification with this particular author.

In terms of influence over the writing of biography, it is clear that Plutarch easily and early outstripped Suetonius as a model (see Pelling (2004/5) 71–88, esp. 73–74 and 79–80). Dryden's preface already demonstrates that Plutarch's moral biography made him superior in the eyes of Christian readers (17: 276–277). The influence of Plutarch on Walton's *Lives* has been discussed by Martin ((2001) 32–65), who refers to laudatory Latin verses which address Walton specifically as a "new Plutarch" (Martin (2001) 33–34). The portrayal of virtue using Plutarchan techniques of comparison, contrast (that is, comparisons and contrasts to be found within *Lives*, such as the use made in *Antony* of the contrast between Cleopatra and Octavia, or in *Brutus* of the personalities of Cassius and Brutus, not full-blown parallelism), and the significant anecdote, liberates biography from sensationalism and allows a more intimate type of *Life*, which refines panegyric into something more humanizing: not a warts-and-all portrayal, but a sympathetic, yet not uncritical, appreciation.

Possibly the most important contribution of Plutarch to biographical method in this period, though, is his defense of the use of anecdote and detail in the creation of a character. So Boswell, that master of minutiae, appeals at the start of the *Life of Johnson*

to the authority of Plutarch in defense of this proposition before even the authority of his own subject:

What I consider as the peculiar value of the following work, is, the quantity that it contains of Johnson's conversation ... That the conversation of a celebrated man, if his talent have been exerted in conversation, will best display his character, is, I trust, too well established in the judgement of mankind to be at all shaken ... If authority be required, let us appeal to Plutarch, the prince of ancient biographers. [He then quotes *Alexander* 1.2 in Greek and in Langhorne's translation.] To this may be added the sentiments of the very man whose life I am about to exhibit. "The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue ..." (Boswell (1999) 14)

The long quotation from Johnson, which I have greatly abbreviated here, is highly indebted to Plutarch; Johnson intended to produce an annotated edition of Plutarch (Stauffer (1941) 395), and influenced Boswell in Plutarchan directions when counseling him on how to create the portrait of Paoli in Boswell's *Journal of a tour to Corsica*. The kinship between the two is neatly alluded to by Dodds (1933) 106: "It is clear that [Plutarch] was not only a prodigious reader but a great talker, the Dr. Johnson of Chaeronea." Had Plutarch written the *Life of Johnson*, while it would surely have been shorter, it must still have contained a great deal of conversation and a selection of Boswell's best anecdotes. It is impossible to resist an illustration of Boswell's Plutarchan technique. Probably the most famous passage in the *Life of Johnson* (at least to cat-lovers), from the account of 1783 (Boswell (1999) 855), is redolent of Plutarchan methods:

Nor would it be just, under this head [his kindness to his servants], to omit the fondness which he shewed for animals which he had taken under his protection. I never shall forget the indulgence with which he treated Hodge, his cat: for whom he himself used to go out and buy oysters, lest the servants having that trouble should take a dislike to the poor creature. I am, unluckily, one of those who have an antipathy to a cat, so that I am uneasy when in the room with one; and I own, I frequently suffered a good deal from the presence of this same Hodge. I recollect him one day scrambling up Dr. Johnson's breast, apparently with much satisfaction, while my friend smiling and half-whistling, rubbed down his back, and pulled him by the tail; and when I observed he was a fine cat, saying, "Why yes, Sir, but I have had cats whom I liked better than this;" and then as if perceiving Hodge to be out of countenance, adding, "but he is a very fine cat, a very fine cat indeed."

One need only compare Plutarch's tirade against Cato for his treatment of his slaves and animals at *Cato the Elder* 5 ("A kindly man will take good care of his horses even when they are worn out with age, and of his dogs, too, not only in their puppyhood, but when their old age needs nursing. ... I certainly would not sell even an ox that had worked for me, just because he was old, much less an elderly man, removing him for his habitual place and customary life, as it were from his native land, for a paltry price") to realize that Plutarch would immediately have seen the possibilities of this story for illuminating Johnson's character: the story illustrates his consideration both for his servants and for the cat. The neat conclusion of the anecdote with direct speech is also a Plutarchan feature. What is not so Plutarchan is Boswell's personal comment – inevitably, since Plutarch

lived much later than any of his subjects in the *Parallel Lives* – and yet it is not wholly alien: where Plutarch has a personal note to insert, he does so (see e.g. *Ant.* 28.3).

Plutarch's moralism, and his detailed and anecdotal style, then, were both widely imitated in the long eighteenth century; his name alone had become synonymous with biography. His influence on the moral biographies, addressed, interestingly, to children, of the popular *The British Plutarch* (first published in 1762, reissued by Thomas Mortimer in 1776 and often subsequently enlarged and reprinted) is obvious, if superficial. We find other, similar titles, where "Plutarch" means little more than "a collection of biographies": *The Revolutionary Plutarch* (2nd ed. 1804), *The Female Revolutionary Plutarch* (1803), *The Cambrian Plutarch*, by J.H. Parry (1834). More sophisticated works adopted Plutarchan methods to write the lives of contemporary figures, though not always in a spirit that Plutarch himself would have admired. An anonymous author produced a *Life of John Wilkes, Esq.; in the manner of Plutarch* (1773), which effectively parodied a Plutarchan moral biography to attack its subject (the radical politician after whom the assassin of Lincoln was named). The preface neatly mimics a Plutarchan programmatic statement, but is heavily sarcastic given that the target was a notorious womanizer (and the author of an obscene parody of Pope's *Essay on Man* called *Essay on Woman*) as well as a controversially outspoken champion of liberty: "Most ages have produced some shining models of undaunted virtue and unabating patriotism. It is the part of the Biographer to select characters from the mass of mankind, and to hold those only up to view who have been most distinguished on the vast theatre of human life. Were men to be promiscuously described, little advantage would be derived from reviewing the annal of past or present times, and the eye, after a glance, would turn away with weariness, as from an unbounded plain, or a mirror, where all objects were presented indiscriminately. But if others have laboured under the disadvantage of describing characters equally mixed with right and wrong, the Author here has little reason to complain of such blended materials. He gives one, bold, enterprising, and the same, ever possessing uniform principles, without deviation and without ambiguity." We may note the use of the image of the mirror, familiar from *Aemilius* 1.1 (see Zadorojnyi (2010), and for its origins Barrett (1965) on *Hipp.* 428–430), and the sense of the importance of biography as a source of examples for general conduct. So far the parody is very muted, but the author tips his hand in the following account of Wilkes' birth: "A man, says Plutarch, to be completely great, must be born in some famous city (compare *Demosthenes* 1). London boasts the birth of Mr Wilkes. His mother, it is reported, was delivered without pain or labour; and a spectre appeared to the nurse, which foretold that the child she then suckled, should prove the ornament and support of the British Empire: circumstances which to many would have appeared trifling and enthusiastic, had not his future conduct evinced the truth of the prediction." Another Plutarchan touch is a parody of *Cicero* 1.3: "when some of his friends judged that he should change his name before he engaged in state affairs, he prettily enough replied, that he would make the name of *Wilkes* more glorious than that of a *Catiline* or a *Cade*." As Stauffer ((1941) 466) points out, this work depends heavily on a wide recognition of Plutarchan stories and tropes for its success, which was guaranteed by the appearance and frequent reissue not only of Dryden's *Lives* (1702–1711, 1716, 1727, 1758, 1763), but also John and William Langhorne's (seven editions between 1770 and 1798), and by abbreviated versions in 1713, 1762 (perhaps by Oliver Goldsmith), and one specifically for use in schools in 1800.

One important Plutarchan idea that almost never caught on, however, is parallelism: Mortimer's *The British Plutarch* makes no attempt to find parallels or comparisons, but simply compiles *Lives* in chronological order (at least in the later editions). Neither Walton nor Johnson ever seems to have felt the need to imitate this aspect of Plutarch, either. Where the concept was imitated, it was even more rarely done in such a way as to suggest much understanding of the principle on which Plutarch worked: some parallel lives were written of two figures from similar worlds or with similar careers (such as William Hayley's *Two dialogues; containing a comparative view of the lives, characters, and writings, of Philip, the late Earl of Chesterfield, and Dr. Samuel Johnson*, published in 1787), but few of two figures of different nations (the data are collected by Stauffer (1941) 467). An honorable exception is Jerom Alley's prize essay (published in Dublin in 1789), *A comparative view of the lives of Henry the Fourth of France, and William the Third*, though his method is to compare his two characters point by point throughout rather than provide two connected narratives side by side in the Plutarchan manner. Not until much more recently have parallel biographies come back into favor, to a limited extent, with Alan Bullock's *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (1991). And, as Bullock himself acknowledges, this is a very different kind of parallelism, between two roughly contemporary figures rather than men from different periods as well as nations; and between villains rather than heroes. Still, the comparative method is owed directly to Plutarch: "My purpose is not to show that they were both examples of a general category but to use comparison to illuminate the unique individual character of each. Hence my subtitle, borrowed from Plutarch: parallel lives, like parallel lines, do not meet or merge" (Bullock (1991) xviii; by contrast, I see no direct Plutarchan influence on Stauffer (2008)). It is perhaps not only the commercial requirements of publishers, then, that have for so many years caused Plutarch's *Lives* to have been most widely circulated in translation, not in their original pairs but in groups of Greeks and Romans: the importance of this part of his enterprise has only been recently widely understood even among scholars (see now Humble (2010)).

And it has never been scholars who have been the most avid readers of Plutarch; his readership has always been broader than that of most ancient authors, and continues to be so. British readers of a certain age will remember the Ladybird books, especially series 561, which covered history. Almost all the titles were in fact biographical (*Warwick the Kingmaker*, *Florence Nightingale*, etc.), conforming to Carlyle's dictum that "History is the essence of innumerable biographies"; most of them (thirty-two out of forty-nine) were written by Lawrence Du Garde Peach, an author and playwright who as a graduate student had had an interest in Dryden. *Alexander the Great* was my favorite (though *The Story of Clothes and Costume* from series 601 ran it a close second), and the text was (in retrospect) a highly condensed version of Plutarch's *Alexander*. The Plutarchan anecdotes, dashinglly illustrated by John Kenney, made exciting reading. Nor was Plutarchan moralism lacking. The synopsis ran: "Alexander the Great, who lived more than two thousand years ago, was not only a great soldier who conquered the whole of the then known world, he was also a wise and just ruler. This is his story." On balance I think Plutarch would have been pleased.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

For an overview of Plutarch's influence on English biography consult Mossman (2007).

CHAPTER 42

Plutarch and the Early American Republic

Carl J. Richard

During the early republican era, nearly all educated Americans were the products of a centuries-old system that emphasized study of the Greco-Roman classics from childhood through the college years. Although Latin held primacy over Greek in the schools even in the antebellum period, when the philhellenic movement reached its height, even ordinary Americans had access to Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* through numerous, inexpensive English translations that consistently ranked among the nation's bestsellers. The founders of the United States not only loved Plutarch but learned from his biographies valuable lessons that shaped the nation's political system. During the antebellum period, Plutarch also influenced the Romantics, who created the United States' first national literature. Beloved by many Americans, the Greek biographer also helped inspire the "great-man theory" that prevailed among the nation's first historians.

Although American grammar school masters spent the majority of their time teaching Latin, many regarded Plutarch as both a valuable instructor in morality and republicanism and a delectable treat that could be held out as a reward to their students. While a student at Harvard, Charles Francis Adams, the son and grandson of presidents and later the United States' minister to Great Britain during the Civil War, recalled regarding his favorite teacher at Boston Latin School, Francis Jenks: "He implanted or strengthened in me an early taste for reading by a simple method which I should always recommend to a good schoolmaster. After having got my lesson, he used to permit me to read a Plutarch which he kept on purpose in the school and gave it to me as a mark of distinction and scholarship, in this way exciting me by every motive which can act upon a boy to gain instruction. I believe it is to this I owe my clear ideas on the subject of history" (Donald (1964) 1: 198).

Translations of Plutarch's *Lives* flooded the early American republic. By the nineteenth century these editions were being churned out even by backwoods presses, blissfully

unmoved by copyrights (Wright (1955) 116). The Greek biographer's genial humanity and remarkable talent for relating fascinating anecdotes concerning the moral character of individual historical figures suited him perfectly for moralistic and individualistic Americans.

Popular translations of Plutarch's *Lives* extended the knowledge of Greek and Roman history to those who could not afford a rigorous classical education and to those whose education was shortened by circumstances. As a young man, Benjamin Franklin, whose poverty restricted him to only one year of formal schooling, relished an English translation of the *Lives*. He later recorded in his autobiography, "I still think that time spent to great advantage" (Lemisch (1961) 22–23, 26). Although Franklin was an opponent of the classical languages requirement in the schools, he was an ardent supporter of requiring students to read ancient history in the vernacular, a project ideally suited to the reading of Plutarch (Best (1962) 141). Though Alexander Hamilton's education at King's College (now Columbia University) was shortened by the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, which drew him into the Continental Army in January of 1776, Hamilton converted his military pay book into a commonplace book. There he copied large extracts from John Dryden's translation (1683) of Plutarch's lives of Theseus, Romulus, Lycurgus, and Numa Pompilius, all founders of states (Syrett (1961–1979) 1: 390–407). Hamilton's sons later testified that Plutarch and Alexander Pope were Hamilton's favorite authors (Flexner (1978) 47).

Americans of the revolutionary and early republican eras developed a deep love for Plutarch and, through him in part, a profound attachment to republicanism. Charles Lee declared, "I have ever from the first time I read Plutarch been an Enthusiastick for liberty ... and for liberty in a republican garb." He noted regarding the tremendous influence of the ancient historians on the youth of his age, "It is natural to a young person whose chief companions are the Greek and Roman Historians and Orators to be dazzled with the splendid picture." On becoming his nation's first minister to Russia in 1809, John Quincy Adams carried Plutarch's *Lives* with him, rereading the biographies of Lycurgus and Solon on the ship en route to St. Petersburg (Reinhold (1984) 41, 258–259). When his son, George Washington Adams, was elected to the Massachusetts legislature, John Quincy advised him to read Plutarch and to employ "all the Stoic virtues – Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice" (Shepherd (1980) 274).

Believing, like Plutarch, that the purpose of history was to teach moral and political lessons, the founders of the United States derived many such lessons from their favorite biographer. From Plutarch's lives of Lycurgus and Agesilaus the founders learned to admire Spartan virtues, even while rejecting the harsh system of social conditioning that produced them. When Samuel Adams, the "Father of the American Revolution," prayed that Boston would become a "Christian Sparta," he was referring to Spartan frugality, selflessness, valor, and patriotism (Reinhold (1984) 157). Similarly, in his *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* (1767), the most influential pamphlet of the Revolution, John Dickinson praised Spartan calm and courage, writing:

To such a wonderful degree were the ancient Spartans, as brave and free a people as ever existed, inspired by this happy temperature of soul that rejecting even in their battles the use of trumpets and other instruments for exciting heat and rage, they marched to the scenes of havoc and horror, with the sound of flutes, to the tunes of which their steps kept

pace – “exhibiting,” as Plutarch says, “at once a terrible and delightful sight, and proceeding with a deliberate valor, full of hope and good assurance, as if some divinity had sensibly assisted them.” (*Lyc.* 22; Ford (1970) 324)

But while the founders admired many of the traits that the Spartans’ intense military training instilled in them, few were prepared to advocate so complete a suppression of individuality. Thomas Jefferson referred to the Spartans as “military monks.” In *Federalist* No. 6 Alexander Hamilton noted, “Sparta was little better than a well-regulated camp” (Rahe (1992) 155, 324). John Adams called Sparta’s communal ownership of goods “stark mad.” To the Abbé de Mably’s statement, “How right Lycurgus was in forbidding Spartans to communicate with other Greeks!” Adams retorted, “Is it such a felicity to be confined in a cage, den, or cave? Is this a liberty?” (Haraszti (1952) 122, 136). The founders sought the Spartans’ numerous virtues without the brutal system of socialization that produced them.

From Plutarch’s life of Themistocles (as well as from Herodotus’ account of the Persian Wars) the founders learned that it was possible for a collection of small republics to defeat a centralized, monarchical empire in a war for survival. This was a crucial lesson because the founders faced such a power in Great Britain during the Revolutionary War. Just as few contemporary observers had expected the Greek republics to defeat the Persian Empire, the greatest power on earth in the early fifth century BCE, few observers of the founders’ day expected the weak and undisciplined collection of American republics to defeat Great Britain, the greatest power on earth in the eighteenth century. After the Coercive Acts (which the colonists called the Intolerable Acts) were passed in 1774, John Adams expressed a common view: “The Grecian Commonwealths were the most heroic Confederacy that ever existed. ... The Period of their glory was from the Defeat of Xerxes to the Rise of Alexander. Let Us not be enslaved, my dear Friend, Either by Xerxes or Alexander” (Taylor (1977–1995) 2: 99).

Based partly on Plutarch’s biography, the founders idolized Themistocles. When Thomas Jefferson wished to compliment John Adams, a staunch supporter of a strong American navy, he compared Adams to the Athenian leader, whose success in building the Athenian fleet had secured victory for Greece in the Persian Wars (Lehmann (1965) 93).

In the years after the Revolutionary War the founders did not forget the chief lesson they had learned from Plutarch’s account of the Persian Wars, the superiority of republican government to centralized monarchy. Indeed, the Antifederalists went further, opposing any centralization of power within the new republican government on the grounds that the Persian and Revolutionary Wars had proved centralization unnecessary. They argued that the clause of the proposed US Constitution that would allow the existence of a federal army in peacetime was not only dangerous to freedom but also unnecessary, since both the Greeks and the Americans had proved that militias composed of common citizens, motivated by love of liberty, were superior to professional armies. George Mason praised “the little cluster of Greek republics which resisted and almost constantly defeated the Persian monarchy” (Gummere (1963) 180). Of course, as we shall see, the victorious Federalists derived their own lessons from the study of Plutarch.

From Plutarch’s lives of Aristides, Cimon, and Pericles the founders learned the story of the growth of democracy in Athens, and from his lives of Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lysander (as well as from Thucydides) they learned the tale of Sparta’s victory over

Athens in the Peloponnesian War. Since neither Plutarch nor Thucydides was sympathetic to the democratic system of government in Athens, it is not surprising that the founders connected the two developments, blaming Athenian democracy for the disastrous defeat. The negative view of democracy the founders derived from ancient historians and philosophers played no small part in their decision to create a “republic,” a system of mixed government in which the masses would have a share of government power but would be counterbalanced by a powerful executive and by a strong senate, rather than a simple democracy (Richard (1994) 123–149).

The founders not only cited and praised Plutarch but also revered the individual Athenians he immortalized, most of whom had been critics of democracy. “Aristides” was a popular pseudonym throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Ford (1971) 217; Meriwether (1959–1983) 14: 17). Benjamin Rush, although another critic of the classical languages requirement in the schools, considered him a model of integrity (Butterfield (1951) 173). David Ramsay wrote of George Washington, “Enemies he had, but they were few, and chiefly of the same family with the man who could not bear to hear Aristides always called the just” (Schroeder (1855) 315). This was a clear reference to Plutarch’s famous story (*Arist.* 7) that during a vote for ostracism, an illiterate man whom Aristides did not know asked the statesman to write the name “Aristides” on his potsherd for him. Startled, Aristides asked the man, “Has this Aristides injured you in some way?” The man replied that he did not even know Aristides but was just tired of hearing so much praise of “Aristides the Just.” Shaking his head sadly, honest Aristides wrote his own name on the man’s potsherd and was subsequently exiled.

While the founders followed Plutarch in praising the Athenian opponents of democracy, they also joined him in criticizing its supporters. In 1766 George Mason compared the British prime minister George Grenville, the leading advocate of the Stamp Act, to Pericles, recalling Plutarch’s reference to the accusation that Pericles had drawn Athens into the fatal Peloponnesian War in order to deflect attention from his own misuse of funds (*Per.* 31–32). Mason wrote regarding the repeal of the Stamp Act, “No thanks to Mr. Grenville and his party, who without his genius or abilities, has dared to act the part that Pericles did, when he engaged his country in the Peloponnesian War, which, after a long and dreadful scene of blood, ended in the ruin of all Greece, and fitted it for the Macedonian yoke” (Rowland (1964) 1: 386). Alexander Hamilton brought the same charge against Pericles, which is absent from Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian War* and is found only in Plutarch’s life of Pericles (though even Plutarch did not explicitly endorse it), to argue, in *Federalist* No. 6, that a strong central government was necessary to prevent warfare between the states. Surely, Hamilton contended, the American states could not remain forever free of such leaders as Pericles, who had started the Peloponnesian War, a war that “terminated in the ruin of the Athenian commonwealth,” to cover up his own misdeeds (Hamilton, Jay, and Madison (1941) 27–28).

In Plutarch’s lives of Demosthenes, Phocion, Alexander, and Aratus (as well as in Polybius’ *Histories*) the founders encountered the story of the conquest of the Greek republics by Macedon and Rome. From this tale most of them learned the importance of a strong central government to bind the American states together in a powerful union. Without such a union, these founders believed, there was a real danger that the United States would suffer the same fate as the Greeks, who lost their liberty because of constant internal strife that left them vulnerable to foreign invaders. At the Constitutional

Convention James Madison made the point: just as Greek disunity had allowed the Macedonian king Philip II to “practice intrigues” resulting in their enslavement, so American disunity would produce the same result. Constant warfare between the Greeks might be repeated among the American states unless they were bound together by a strong central government under a new constitution (Farrand (1966) 1: 449). The US Constitution, which replaced the Articles of Confederation as the nation’s constitution, established such a government. John Adams also urged the creation of a stronger federal government in his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, which was circulated at the Constitutional Convention. This work brought attention to the Achaean League, a confederacy of Greek city-states discussed by Plutarch, which Adams considered a laudable but ultimately unsuccessful attempt at a confederation of republics. Adams concluded, “Such is the passion for independence that this little commonwealth, or confederation of commonwealths, could not hold together.” He concluded that Americans must adopt the sentiments of Aratus, one of the league’s principal leaders, who, according to Plutarch, declared:

That small cities could be preserved by nothing else but a continual and combined force, united by the bond of common interest; and as the members of the body live and breathe by their mutual communication and connection, and when once separated pine away and putrify, in the same manner are cities ruined by being dismembered from one another, as well as preserved, when linked together in one great body. (*Arat.* 24; Adams (1971) 298, 305)

The founders learned to revere the early Roman Republic, and to derive lessons from its history, as much from Plutarch’s biographies of early Romans as from Roman historians like Livy. In particular, the founders learned the crucial importance of virtue to the survival and success of a republic from Plutarch’s lives of Publius, Camillus, Fabius Maximus, Marcellus, and Cato the Elder. They learned from Plutarch’s account of early Rome that virtue was the backbone of a republic, as surely as vice was its cancer. Alexander Hamilton was particularly inclined to use Roman Republican pseudonyms for his essays, pseudonyms largely derived from Plutarch, his favorite author. It was probably Hamilton’s idea to use “Publius” as the pseudonym for the *Federalist*, the famous essays urging the ratification of the US Constitution that he co-authored with James Madison and John Jay, since Hamilton had already written essays under that name nearly a decade earlier. The choice was particularly apt, since the authors of the *Federalist* were attempting to establish a new republic in the United States after the expulsion of George III’s armies, just as Publius had helped establish one in Rome after the expulsion of Tarquin. Hamilton also employed other early Roman pseudonyms taken from Plutarch, such as “Camillus” (Syrett (1961–1979) 1: 563; 18: 475).

Among Plutarch’s Roman heroes, Fabius was especially popular. John Dickinson used the name for a series of essays endorsing the US Constitution (Ford (1970) 167). Alexander Hamilton called George Washington “the American Fabius” because, imitating the tactic Fabius employed repeatedly against the Carthaginian foe, Washington had wisely and steadfastly avoided engaging the better-trained British enemy in the early part of the war, waiting for more opportune moments to attack (Wills (1981) 60). In his (in)famous life of Washington, the biography that originated the mythical cherry tree story, Parson Weems made the same comparison, declaring that Washington was as “prudent as Fabius” (Wills (1984) 35).

The founders' study of Plutarch's lives of Late Republican Romans (Marius, Sulla, Crassus, Pompey, Caesar, Mark Antony, Brutus, Cato the Younger, and Cicero), along with their perusal of the works of Sallust and Cicero, not only reinforced their belief in the importance of virtue to a republic but also convinced them of the need for vigilance against ambitious individuals who might threaten the republic. A great fan of Joseph Addison's *Cato*, an enormously popular play based closely on Plutarch's lives of Cato and Caesar, George Washington frequently quoted the play and even ordered it performed at Valley Forge in hopes of improving his soldiers' morale by inspiring them with the example of Cato's men, who had demonstrated extreme selflessness in the struggle for liberty (McDonald (1985) 69, 195). Perhaps it was Cato's willingness to sacrifice his property on behalf of the republic that led Washington to reproach his overseer for placating British troops with grain. Washington declared that the overseer should allow Mount Vernon to be leveled before giving any aid to the enemy (Wills (1984) 186). Washington even employed the same tactics Cato employed to face down mutineers that Cato used in Act III, Scene 5 of Addison's play (Richard (1994) 58–60). Indeed, the two most famous lines of the American Revolution, Patrick Henry's "Give me liberty or give me death" and Nathan Hale's "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country," were paraphrases of lines from the play (Guthkelch (1978) 1:357, 432).

The founders also revered Caesar's assassins Brutus and Cassius. During the Stamp Act crisis in 1765 John Adams declared optimistically, "Let us take it for granted that the same great spirit which once gave Caesar so warm a reception ... [and] which first seated the great grandfather of his present most gracious Majesty on the throne of Britain is still alive and active and warm in England; and that the same spirit in America, instead of provoking the inhabitants of that country, will endear us to them forever and secure their good will." In 1767 he quoted William Shakespeare: "Cassius from Bondage shall deliver Cassius" (Taylor (1977–1995) 1: 125, 194). In 1790 James Wilson quoted Cicero in praise of Brutus: "Even those against whom he made decisions he sent away unruffled and placated" (McCloskey (1967) 1: 297). Benjamin Rush liked to quote Brutus himself: "I early devoted myself to my country, and I have ever since lived a life of liberty and glory" (Adair and Schutz (1966) 210).

The reverse side of the founders' reverence for Cato, Cicero, Brutus, and Cassius was their distaste for Julius Caesar, whose corruption of the Roman Republic had resulted in the rise of the emperors. In 1764 James Otis called Caesar "the destroyer of the Roman glory and grandeur, at a time when but for him and his adherents both might have been rendered immortal" (Bailyn (1965) 1: 422). In a famous part of Patrick Henry's Stamp Act Speech of 1765, Henry even compared George III to Caesar, declaring, "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George III [cries of 'Treason!'] may profit by their example" (Meade (1957–1969) 1: 173–178). In 1771 John Adams compared Massachusetts' new royal governor, the loyalist Thomas Hutchinson, to Caesar: "Caesar, by destroying the Roman Republic, made himself a perpetual Dictator; Hutchinson, by countenancing and supporting a System of Corruption and Tyranny, has made himself Governor" (Butterfield (1961) 2: 35). Christopher Gadsden and Josiah Quincy summed up patriot sentiment when both claimed that Great Britain was to America "what Caesar was to Rome," a corrupting influence (Godbold and Woody (1982) 49; Mullett (1939) 97). In 1779, when opposing Congress' inflationary measures, Rush wrote, "None of you can be unacquainted with the depravity of morals

and manners that preceded the overthrow of the Commonwealth of Rome. The effects of universal vice are the same whether produced by plentiful emissions of money or by the artful designs of a Marius or Sylla. Are we sure we have no Caesars or Cromwells in this country?" (Butterfield (1951) 1: 235).

Both John Adams and Thomas Jefferson compared Alexander Hamilton to Caesar. Adams wrote, "When Burr shot Hamilton, it was not Brutus killing Caesar in the Senate-House, but it was killing him before he passed the Rubicon" (Robathan (1946) 97–98). Adams compared Caesar's and Augustus' exploitation of the first and second triumvirates to Hamilton's tactics, noting that "their intrigues and cabals have analogy enough with Hamilton's schemes to get rid of Washington, Adams, Jay, and Jefferson and monopolize all power to himself" (Adair and Schutz (1966) 45).

In 1811 Jefferson told the story that at a party Jefferson had hosted while secretary of state in 1791, Hamilton had inquired into the identity of the three men portrayed in Jefferson's wall paintings. When Jefferson replied that they were "the three greatest men the world had ever produced," Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, and John Locke, there had been a pause. Hamilton had then declared that "the greatest man that ever lived was Julius Caesar." Jefferson considered the story highly significant: while Jefferson, a true republican, modeled himself after men of learning, Hamilton, a secret monarchist, modeled himself after a military figure who had done more than anyone else to corrupt and overturn the illustrious Roman Republic (Bergh and Lipscomb (1903) 13: 4). The evidence indicates, however, that either Jefferson misunderstood Hamilton, or Hamilton was playing a joke on the humorless Virginian. All of Hamilton's references to Caesar in his correspondence were negative, with the sole exception of a neutral reference to his military skill (Govan (1975) 475–480).

Indeed, although Hamilton was well aware that detractors compared him to Caesar, he considered his opponents more deserving of the infamous name. As early as 1779, after remarking to his friend John Laurens that Henry Lee was "an officer of great capacity" but had "a little of the Julius Caesar or Cromwell in him," Hamilton declared in a postscript to the letter, "Apropos – Speaking of a Caesar & a Cromwell ... the Cabal have reported that I declared in a public house in Philadelphia 'that it was high time for the people to rise, join General Washington, & turn Congress out of doors.' ... But you who know my sentiments will know how to join me in despising these miserable detractors." In a 1792 letter to George Washington defending his plan for funding the national debt at face value, Hamilton declared, "It has aptly been observed that Cato was the Tory – Caesar the whig of his day. The former frequently resisted – the latter always flattered the follies of the people. Yet the former perished with the Republic, [while] the latter destroyed it. No popular Government was ever without its Catalines & its Caesars. These are its true enemies." In the next month Hamilton publicized the charge in the *Philadelphia Gazette of the United States*, calling the Democratic-Republicans the "Caesars of the community (a description of men to be found in every republic) who, leading the dance to the tune of liberty without law, endeavor to intoxicate the people with delicious, but poisonous draughts, to render them the easier victims of their rapacious ambition" (Syrett (1961–1979) 2: 168; 12: 252, 500–501).

Hamilton left no doubt regarding the particular Democratic-Republicans to whom he referred. In the same essay he concluded regarding Jefferson, "But there is always a first time, when characters studious of artful disguises are unveiled; when the vizard of stoicism is plucked from the brow of the Epicurean; when the plain garb of Quaker

simplicity is stripped from the concealed voluptuary; when Caesar coyly refusing the proffered diadem is seen to be Caesar rejecting the trappings, but tenaciously grasping the substance of imperial domination.” Three days earlier Hamilton had declared, “In a word, if we have an embryo-Caesar in the United States, ’tis [Aaron] Burr” (Syrett (1961–1979) 12: 480, 504–505).

The founders’ immersion in the history of the Late Roman Republic had a profound effect on their style of thought. They developed from the classics a suspicious cast of mind. They learned to fear conspiracies against liberty. Steeped in a literature whose perpetual theme was the steady encroachment of tyranny on liberty, the founders became virtually obsessed with spotting its approach, so that they might avoid the fate of their Roman heroes. So prevalent was the founders’ fear of conspiracies against liberty, a fear derived largely from their lifelong immersion in classical political horror stories such as those contained in Plutarch’s biographies of the Late Roman Republicans, that they could seriously equate one another – their recent partners in the struggle against British tyranny – with Caesar. The presence of these irrational analogies in private letters and diaries suggests that they were fervent beliefs, not mere rhetorical devices. The same visceral fear of conspiracies that instilled in the founders a passionate love of liberty and a proper recognition of its fragility also fueled the tendency to see a conspiracy behind every well-intentioned blunder, a conspirator in every opponent. There was a dark side to the sense of identity and purpose that the classical authors bequeathed the founders. It required fresh threats of tyranny for sustenance. Where such threats did not exist, they must be created.

This paranoia persisted beyond the founders’ generation because both the rigorous system of classical education and the publication of numerous translations of Plutarch’s *Lives* continued beyond their era. When Secretary of the Treasury William J. Duane refused to obey Andrew Jackson’s order to remove vital funds from the national bank, Jackson fired Duane. Responding on the Senate floor, Henry Clay compared Jackson’s action to that of Caesar in entering the Roman treasury, sword in hand, to confiscate public funds in order to prosecute his civil war against Pompey. Clay read from Plutarch’s *Life of Caesar*, interjecting his own comments: “As Metellus, the tribune, opposed his taking the money out of the public treasury, and cited some laws against it (such, sir, I suppose, as I have endeavored to cite on this occasion), Caesar said, ‘If you are not pleased with what I am about, you have only to withdraw (Leave the office, Mr. Duane!)’. ... Having said this, he approached the doors of the treasury, and as the keys were not produced, he sent for workmen to break them open. Metellus again opposed him, and gained credit with some for his firmness; but Caesar ... threatened to put him to death, if he gave any further trouble. ... Metellus, terrified by the measure, retired” (*Caes.* 35; Miles (1968) 370). John C. Calhoun, by then an enemy of Jackson, seized upon the analogy, declaring:

The Senator from Kentucky, in connexion with this part of his argument, read a striking passage from one of the most pleasing and instructive writers in any language (Plutarch), giving the description of Caesar forcing himself, sword in hand, into the treasury of the Roman Commonwealth. We are at the same stage of our political revolution, and the analogy between the two cases is complete, varied only by the character of the actors and the circumstances of the times. That was a case of an intrepid and bold warrior as an open plunderer, seizing forcibly the treasury of the country, which, in that Republic, as well as ours, was confided to the custody of the legislative department of the Government. The actors in our case are of a different character – artful, cunning, and corrupt politicians, not fearless warriors. They have entered the treasury, not sword in hand, as public plunderers, but with

the false keys of sophistry, as pilferers, under the silence of midnight. The motive and object are the same. ... "With money I will get men, and with men money" was the maxim of the Roman plunderer. With money we will get partisans, with partisans votes, and with votes money, is the maxim of our public pilferers. With men and money Caesar struck down Roman liberty at the fatal battle of Phillippi [actually, Pharsalus], never to rise again; from which disastrous hour, all the powers of the Roman republic were consolidated in the person of Caesar, and perpetuated in his line. With money and corrupt partisans, a great effort is now making to choke and stifle the voice of American liberty, through all its natural organs. (Meriwether (1959–1983) 12: 221)

Calhoun's speech portraying Jackson as an American Caesar was so compelling that the *Washington Globe* blamed it for the first presidential assassination attempt in American history, Richard Lawrence's unsuccessful effort to shoot Jackson. Regarding Lawrence, an anonymous writer for the *Globe* insinuated, "Whether he has become infatuated with the chimeras which have troubled the brains of the disappointed orators who have depicted the President as a Caesar who ought to have a Brutus – as a Cromwell – a Nero – a Tiberius, we know not" (Meriwether (1959–1983) 12: 410). The author, who singled out Calhoun for blame, was wrong about Lawrence, a delusional house painter who had perhaps sniffed too much lead paint (Remini (1977) 229). Nevertheless, it was probably no accident that the first successful presidential assassin, John Wilkes Booth – the son and brother of men named Junius Brutus Booth, after the ancestor of Caesar's assassin who drove Tarquin, the corrupt king, from Rome – allegedly shouted, "Sic semper tyrannis" (Thus be it ever for tyrants) after killing Abraham Lincoln. The state motto of Virginia both reflected and reinforced the republican fear of tyrants (Rhodehamel and Taper (1997) 4, 16, 35). Booth and two of his brothers had appeared in a stage production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, a play based on Plutarch's life of Caesar, in New York City less than five months before Lincoln's assassination (Weichmann (1975) 41).

Plutarch's influence was not confined to early American politics. His talent for relating fascinating anecdotes concerning the moral character of ancient historical figures suited him perfectly for the individualistic and moralistic, but largely non-religious, American Romantics. For instance, Nathaniel Hawthorne read Plutarch with "great satisfaction" (Charvat and Pearce (1962–1988) 18: 204).

Henry David Thoreau admired Plutarch as well. He liked the courage portrayed in his *Parallel Lives*. He also agreed with Plutarch that historical events themselves were less important than what they revealed about character: "The value of human traits in Grecian history depends not so much on their importance in history, as [on] the readiness with which they accept a wide interpretation, and illustrate the poetry and ethics of mankind. While they announce no particular truth, they are yet central to all truth. They are like those examples by which we improve, but of which we never formally extract the moral" (Allen and Torrey (1984) 1: 165).

Plutarch was one of Ralph Waldo Emerson's favorite authors. Emerson wrote, "We cannot read Plutarch without a tingling of the blood," and called the biographer "the elixir of Greece and Rome" (Reinhold (1984) 260). He thought of Plutarch's heroes when traveling in Sicily. He made certain that Plutarch's *Lives* was on the reading list of young Hillman Simpson, whose education Emerson financed and supervised following the death of Hillman's father (Rusk (1939) 1: xxxi; 2: 9). In 1837 Emerson wrote: "Plutarch I esteem a greater benefactor than Aristotle. To him we owe the Brasidas, the

Dions, the Phocians & the other men" (Gilman (1960–1982) 5: 351). In an 1841 letter to his brother William, Emerson asked: "Do you never read Plutarch? I can never have done with him. Only yesterday I read the life of Cleomenes & of the Gracchi & Demosthenes" (Rusk (1939) 2: 444). He often quoted from Plutarch's life of Agesilaus the Spartan king's response to hearing the word "great" applied to the Persian king: "How is he greater than I if he be not more just?" (*Ages.* 23). He admired Plutarch's reverence for poetry: "The way in which Plutarch & the ancients usually quote the Poets is quite remarkable, as it indicates a deep & universal reverence for poetry, indicates a faith in Inspiration. They quote Pindar much as a pious Christian does David or Paul. Where is that reverence now?" He also claimed: "Plutarch fits me better than [Robert] Southey or [Walter] Scott. ... Plutarch is charming by the facility of his associations, so that it matters little where you open his book, you find yourself instantly at the Olympian tables. His memory is like the Olympic Games wherein all that was noble & excellent in all Greece was assembled" (Gilman (1960–1982) 4: 50–51; 5: 109; 7: 269, 303). Regarding Plutarch, Emerson added: "I must think we are more deeply indebted to him than to all the ancient writers. ... A wild courage, Stoicism not of the schools but of the blood, shines in every anecdote and has given that book its immense fame. ... The opinion of the world is expressed in the innumerable cheap editions, which make it as accessible as a newspaper" (Emerson (1968) 2: 248; 7: 199–200). (Emerson failed to note the differences between Stoicism and Plutarch's Middle Platonism.) In 1840 Emerson wrote, "There is hardly a life in Plutarch that does not infuse a new courage & prowess into the youth & make him gladder & bolder for his own work." The following year he added, "Plutarch's heroes are my friends and relatives" (Gilman (1960–1982) 7: 496; 8: 108).

The most uncommon characteristic of Emerson's love of Plutarch was that it was based as much on Plutarch's *Moralia*, a collection of moral essays filled with anecdotes and epigrams that was little appreciated in America before Emerson, as on Plutarch's far more highly acclaimed *Parallel Lives* (Reinhold (1984) 259). Emerson noted: "Plutarch's *Morals* is less known and seldom reprinted. Yet such a reader as I am writing to can as ill spare it as the *Lives*" (Emerson (1968) 7: 200). Emerson claimed regarding the *Moralia*, "If the world's library were burning, I should as soon fly to rescue that as Shakespeare and Plato, or next afterwards" (Reinhold (1984) 260). Emerson wrote: "I keep the 'Morals' always near me. They are admirable Prayer books" (Rusk (1939) 1: xxxii). In 1837 he wrote in his journal, "After raffling all morning in Plutarch's *Morals* ... or shall I say angling there for such fish as I might find, I sallied out this fine afternoon through the woods to Walden Water." The next day he wrote: "The charm of Plutarch & Plato & Thucydides for me, I believe, is that there I get ethics without cant. I am struck with the splendor of the sentences I meet in books, especially in Plutarch" (Gilman (1960–1982) 5: 352–353).

Emerson was particularly fond of Plutarch's essays on behalf of the immortality of the soul, divine Providence, and divine justice. Despite Emerson's attachment to Plato, he claimed that Plutarch's *Moralia* contained "a more sweet and reassuring argument on the immortality [of the soul] than in the *Phaedo* of Plato, for Plutarch always addresses the question on the human side and not on the metaphysical." Seeing a closeness between Plutarch's philosophy and his own Unitarian Christianity, Emerson wrote: "All his judgments are noble. He thought, with Epicurus, that it is more delightful to do than to receive a kindness" (Emerson (1968) 10: 305, 313–314, 316).

In 1870, in his introduction to William W. Goodwin's new edition of the *Moralia*, an edition that created widespread interest in the work in the United States for the first time, Emerson wrote that Plutarch had "a unique place in literature as an encyclopedia of Greek and Roman antiquity." Emerson claimed that Plutarch's enduring popularity was based on his humanity and on his delight in self-sacrifice, qualities that made his works "a bible for heroes" (Reinhold (1984) 260). Emerson declared regarding Plutarch:

Though he never used verse, he had many qualities of the poet in the power of his imagination, the speed of his mental associations, and his sharp, objective eyes. But what specifically marks him, he is a chief example of the illumination of the intellect by the force of morals. ... I do not know where to find a book – to borrow a phrase of Ben Jonson's – so rammed with life, and this in chapters chiefly ethical, which are so prone to be heavy and sentimental. No poet can illustrate his thought with more novel or striking similes or happier anecdotes. His style is realistic, picturesque, and varied. ... His surprising merit is the general facility with which he deals with manifold topics. There is no trace of labor or pain. ... He is ever manly, far from fawning, and would be welcome to the sages and warriors he reports. ... I find him a better teacher of rhetoric than any modern. ... He disowns any attempt to rival Thucydides, but I suppose he has a hundred readers where Thucydides finds one, and Thucydides must often thank Plutarch for that one.

Emerson concluded, "Plutarch will be perpetually rediscovered from time to time as long as books last" (Emerson (1968) 10: 298, 300–302, 322).

Plutarch's contributions to Emerson included the moral essay, "Spartomania," and Emerson's conception of the hero as a moral exemplar. In Emerson's essay on Abraham Lincoln, delivered as a eulogy in Concord in 1865, he borrowed these lines from James Russell Lowell's commencement ode at Harvard:

Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.

Plutarch contributed more than any other author, ancient or modern, to the "great-man theory," the belief that individual heroes were the primary determinant of the course of history, a theory prevalent during the antebellum period. It is no accident that when Emerson wrote history, he focused on important individuals and entitled the book *Representative Men*. Biographies of George Washington in imitation of Plutarch, ranging in authorship from John Marshall to Parson Weems, abounded, as did biographies of other "great men." The first national historians of the United States, such as the classically educated George Bancroft, emphasized the role of key political leaders; the emphasis on socio-economic factors and other impersonal forces lay in the future of historiography (Wecter (1966) 5, 489). William Ellery Channing claimed that children should read Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* to learn that the "causes of historical events are to be found in gifted, energetic persons" (Conrad (1976) 208).

Plutarch played a major role in the development of the United States. He taught its founders valuable lessons, inspired its earliest renowned writers, and furnished its first historians with a theory of history and with cherished literary models. Because the formative years of the United States constituted the era of Plutarch's greatest influence – the time when the influence of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* was, one might say, unparalleled – his indelible stamp may still be found on the nation's political system and on its literature.

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GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

There are many excellent books concerning the influence of the Greco-Roman classics, including that of Plutarch, on early Americans. The pioneering works in this field were R.M. Gummere's *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture* (1963) and *Seven Wise Men of Colonial America* (1967), and M. Reinhold's *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (1984). Subsequent books that are worthy of note include: H. Benario and W. Briggs, *Basil Lanneau Gildersleeve: An American Classicist* (1986); M. Cleary, *The Bulfinch Solution: Teaching the Ancient Classics in American Schools* (1989); M. Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America* (2009); P. Rahe, *Republics, Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution* (1992); C.J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (1994); C.J. Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts: How the Ancients Inspired the Founding Fathers* (2008); C.J. Richard, *The Golden Age of the Classics in America: Greece, Rome, and the Antebellum United States* (2009); J. Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought* (1994); M. Sellers, *American Republicanism: Roman Ideology in the United States Constitution* (1994); E. Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (2009); J. Shields, *American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self* (2001); S. Wiltshire, *Greece, Rome, and the Bill of Rights* (1992); C. Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910* (2002); and C. Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750–1900* (2007).

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